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1. Chapter 1

"Pennywise will protect you."

Those were the last spoken words that Ana had heard before falling into blissful catatonia, uttered quietly by the guttural voice she had become so accustomed to. Because she had believed them, she felt safe and warm in her dreamy state without an inkling of a single worry. Nightmares were staved off by the reassurance of safekeeping, and even as she dreamed she could sense the embrace of sturdy arms as they kept her snug against a lanky, familiar body.

Sometimes Ana had actual dreams, ones that materialized out of the fabricated memories that had been planted in her when was made human; in them, she saw the people she had previously known to be her parents, her sister, her friends. She even had a few about the university she had supposedly gone to, the sequences complete with classes and a boy she had dated. At other times, it seemed as though she was seeing Pennywise's memories through his viewpoint again, although the images of his ancient hunts weren't nearly as disconcerting as the first time she had been under the spell of the deadlights. Had she been conscious, she may have been concerned about her current state of morality.

Her favorite of Pennywise's recollections were when she was in them. He dreamed often of her, their current connection letting her vividly relive their initial encounters, and their evolving intimacy after all the time spent together in Neibolt house. Even when she was bombarded again with the awfulness of the figures draped in red cloaks threatening to kill her 'family' at the Barrens, she found the memory incredibly satisfying. She could feel the clown's rage as he doled out justice in the form of their brutal deaths, the inner turmoil as he fought every urge not to kill the small red-haired boy, as he knew it would have devastated Ana. As an unknown amount of time continued to march on, Ana's fondness for the cosmic entity intensified through their illuminated union. She felt content, and yet the feeling started to morph into anticipation for the future, particularly the time when they would both awaken from this slumber to be together again.

The dreams and memories played in her mind in a seemingly endless cycle. Most of the time, they presented to her in the exact same way she had seem them before, but on occasion there would be a subtle change to give her something new to experience, however slight it was. It was unsettling then, even in her secure haven, when she suddenly started to see something else.

She was in some sort of building made of white stone, standing in the middle of a large room with a high vaulted ceiling. She saw human-like creatures with glowing skin and colorful hair bustling about, and she knew she was seeing her home, the planet she had been born on and ripped away from not so long ago. It was a universe away, and for the first time since falling under Pennywise's spell, she felt a sense of grief.

At first, it seemed as though she as a mere bystander to some sort of scene that was going to play out, much like when the monks had shown her when she had been pulled away from this dimension. But now one of them was approaching her, and he was looking right at her. He looked more mature than a lot of the other fae that were around, with a full white beard covering his face and thick, wavy white hair to match. He had large, bright blue eyes that almost seemed to glow as they gazed upon her, and he was wearing robes in a rich purple shade rather than the white that all the others in the room were covered in.

"Raanana," he said, his voice silky and kind, "My precious one. How we have missed you." He wrapped his arms around her, pulling her into a hug. As she instinctively returned the embrace, she felt something velvety and stiff under her hands. As she pulled away, she noticed that he had sparkling ivory wings folded neatly on his back, an opening in his robes allowing them to show. She wondered how many of the others had them hidden under the white cloth that covered their bodies.

"I think you're mistaken," she replied softly. The words they were exchanging were not English, and she didn't recognize the language at all, and yet she was still able to understand and speak it.

"I am not," he replied, offering her a warm smile. "You have merely forgotten. I am the Master of Maturin's Temple, and we have finally

found you."

Something Asmod had told her suddenly came rushing back to her, and she blurted, "You're my father?" before she could stop herself.

"I am," the fairy replied, his beaming face unwavering. "I'm doing everything I can to bring you home."

Ana couldn't help but mirror his genuine expression, a smile forming on her features as well. But she quickly checked herself as the swell of hope started to rise within her. "But this isn't real. It's all a dream."

"It's not," he said, but she just shook her head at him.

"I don't want to remember this feeling when I wake up. It will be too heartbreaking."

"My Raanana," he said, placing a large hand on her shoulder. "I beg of you, do not give up hope. We are coming, and we will bring you home. You have so much potential to realize, and you can't do that as a human."

"Potential?" she asked, still not convinced any of this was real, but her curiosity was taking over. "What do you mean?"

"You were on track to earn your wings when you were taken. The longer you are human, the longer human nature will corrupt you, I fear."

The descriptions that both Pennywise and Asmod had used to describe the fairies came to mind as he spoke. *Innocent, pure, pious, angelic, chaste...pathetic.* Ana knew as of late, she had been anything but those things. She was about to tell him that very thing, her bad habit of bluntly saying things she really shouldn't kicking in, when they heard screaming. The fae were starting to run in their direction, and Ana saw a billowing black cloud of smoke rushing towards them.

"What's going on?" Ana asked as he grabbed her hand, urging her to run with him.

"Something evil is coming!" he shouted. They were about to reach the door and step outside, the smoke now filling up every inch inside the

white building, when Ana suddenly woke up.

It took a few seconds for her vision to clear, her brain trying to comprehend the sudden jolt from dreamland to reality. When she could focus her eyes, she was greeted by the sight of dirty silk and red pom-pom's near her face, as Pennywise still had her pulled close to him. She couldn't help but smile a little, knowing that they had essentially cuddled like this for years, even though he could have just let her float.

She heard a low growling in her ear, and her smile quickly faded. Slowly raising her face towards the sound, she gasped when she saw Pennywise's snarling face bearing down on her, his golden eyes feral with hunger and drool dripping down from his cherry red mouth. Ana silently cursed her stupidity as tried to free herself from his strong arms. A small, naive part of her had hoped for their waking moments to be gentle and romantic, possibly with a few spoken sentiments and a soft kiss, even though she knew it was unlikely. But she hadn't expected to worried about him eating her the second they were awake.

Ana knew he was fighting it. If he hadn't been, he would have killed her without a second thought. His eyes were frantically traveling between hers and her neck, as if he were trying to remember who she was. In her struggle, she had been able to free one of her arms, and she tentatively reached a shaking hand towards him, finally placing it gently on his painted cheek.

"Pennywise," she whispered, her voice catching in her throat. "It's me. You know it's me." She yelped as she felt something sharp dig into her side suddenly, as his hands were starting to grow into claws. "Pennywise, let go, you're hurting me!"

With another growl, he released his grip on her, and she scrambled away from him, the cavern offering nothing for hiding spaces. She clutched at her injured rib cage, feeling the wetness of warm blood dripping down her hands. His towering figure advanced on her slowly, one step at a time, his glowing eyes the only bright thing in the surrounding darkness.

He crouched down when he reached her, effortlessly catching her

wrists in his clawed hand as she attempted to shove him away. The next thing she knew, he was ripping her shirt apart, and then he bent his large head down to start lapping up her blood.

Ana knew she should logically still be terrified. But as his tongue continued to trace up and down her skin, she could sense that his intense hunger was being satiated by the taste of her blood, and she started to relax a little, even enjoy it. After a few minutes, she dared to look down at her injuries, seeing that the puncture wounds were no longer bleeding.

"Okay," she said, placing a hand on the back of the clown's neck to get his attention, "Now you're just being greedy."

His long tongue dragged over her pale skin slowly one last time before he slurped it back into his mouth. He looked up at her with golden eyes, the wildness gone and replaced now with mischief. "Don't act like you don't like it!"

She laughed at him, relief washing over her as his usual mocking playfulness showed itself again. "There's a time and place for that. This cave is not one of them."

Pennywise swung her up into his arms like she weighed nothing, like he had done so many times before. "Lucky for you, Pennywise needs to go out and feed right away, or he'd still be licking and you'd be singing a different tune."

She scoffed at him as they started towards the basement of Neibolt house, but she knew full well that he was probably right. Before going into their deep sleep, the cosmic entity had little difficulty seducing her, and she doubted it would be any different now. As he carried her through the gray water, she expected to have their usual banter, but he seemed distracted, his expression hard to read as she looked up at him. No doubt, his hunger after being asleep for years was unbearable, and she was grateful not only for the fact that he hadn't killed her, but that he was taking the time to bring her back up to the house.

As they ascended the well and neared the basement, he started to sniff the air like he was catching a scent. At first she just assumed it

was the predator in him catching the smell of potential prey nearby, but once they were back in the house and he had set her on her feet, Ana caught the smell of smoke.

"There's a fire somewhere close," she said, and Pennywise was already heading back down into the well. She almost called, 'Be careful!' to him, but realized how unnecessary that was before it left her mouth. She went up the steps then, entering the kitchen that looked exactly the same as it had when they had gone to sleep, the smell of burning building intensifying. The sound of sirens were apparent to her now, and her curiosity was starting to outweigh her own hunger. She headed towards the front door to investigate, thinking that the fear this disaster was bringing forth was probably more apparent to Pennywise's senses than the smoke was. It made her shudder.

2. Chapter 2

Ana had no idea what time it was as she walked down the sidewalk, only that it was night. The darkness was peppered with the flashing lights of emergency vehicles rushing to their destination, and she quickly realized that the fire was somewhere downtown. It was an area of Derry she had visited only a handful of times previously, but being that the quaint town only really held one business area, she was able to navigate her way there without issue.

The closer she got to the source of the commotion, the more worried onlookers she saw on the sidewalks and in the streets. By the way people were rushing around, she knew that the catastrophe was still taking place. Citizens of Derry were crying, holding each other, screaming. Ana's heart dropped as she neared the source of their anguish; the elementary school was completely consumed in flames.

She approached a young couple that was standing and watching silently, not wanting to disturb any of the bystanders that were so distraught that they were wailing nonsensically and therefore probably knew someone who had been inside. "What's going on?" she asked quietly as she came to stand next to them.

The woman didn't turn to look at her as she replied, her gaze fixed upon the fire. "The spring concert was tonight. Something exploded in the auditorium."

Ana's hand covered her mouth in shock. "Oh my god..." She didn't know what she could possibly respond with, and abandoned any half hearted attempt at trying to make light of the dire situation.

"We just know that they got some people out. But a lot of others are missing," the woman continued, her tone void of any emotion whatsoever. Her companion was staring at a middle-aged man that had fallen to his knees and was screaming, the people surrounding him doing what they could to offer comfort. Ana took temporary solace in assuming that Heather and Ronnie were now grown and had no reason to be in that building. But then she realized that if 27 years had passed, there was a possibility that could already have school-age children of their own. She had no reason to think that

they had gotten out of Derry once they reached adulthood, as most of the town's citizens stayed for the remainder of their lives. Panic started to set in.

She left the couple without saying a word, heading towards the school, her focus now on trying to make sure her 'family' was safe. But the scene was chaotic, and the police and firemen had much more urgent issues to deal with than the people clamoring to make identifications of the bodies that were still being pulled from the building. Ana joined the group that was crowding the emergency vehicles, trying to see the faces of the rescued children that were being loaded up into the ambulances.

Then she caught sight of the sign that was at the edge of the school's parking lot, the one that announced the children's concert that had promised laughter, singing and unending cuteness rather than the tragedy that had taken its place. It read, 'Elementary Spring Concert 2026, 7pm.' She and Pennywise hadn't been sleeping for twenty-seven years as she had been anticipating. It had only been ten.

Her mind started to race again, trying to grasp that her fake niece and nephew weren't adults yet; relief began to wash over her knowing that they were teenagers, making it more unlikely that they had been in school tonight. Knowing that standing there in the mass confusion was helping no one, she decided to head to the house that she hoped still belonged to Cassandra and Derek. Maybe she would catch a glimpse of the family of four, and then she could sleep knowing at least they were alive.

She was walking away, nearing the end of the line of ambulances that were taking up most of the parking lot, when she heard a child screaming. It was coming from the rig parked at the very edge, and as she rushed towards the sound, she saw a paramedic running towards it as well. Ana reached the back of the ambulance, finding a girl no more than five or six years old, trying to hide herself in the corner of the vehicle.

"Honey, it's okay," the paramedic was saying, climbing into the back of the ambulance with the girl. "You're safe now." The girl was silent now, but tears were streaming down her splotchy little face.

"Fire," Ana heard the child sob. "The fire is going to get me!"

"Is there anything I can do to help?" Ana asked, noticing that the girl's parents didn't seem to be anywhere nearby.

"We can't find her family," he replied. "Actually, it would be a big help if you could stay with her, I have so many other patients to attend to. She's stable, no obvious burns or anything. She just needs to be watched."

"I can do that," Ana replied without hesitation, and the first responder left to attend to someone else in another ambulance. The girl was still huddled in the corner, her face still wet with tears as she looked at Ana. "I'm Ana. What's your name?"

"Abigail," she said with a sniff.

"Nice to meet you, Abigail. I'm going to wait with you here until we find your mom and dad." Ana didn't want to force the girl to come and sit by her on the stretcher, so she waited patiently, talking to the child and trying to keep her mind off of what was going on. It was a welcome distraction for Ana as well.

An hour had passed, and Ana had been able to coax the girl into coming to sit with her on the stretcher. They were talking about Abigail's favorite television show, one about unicorns and pixies that Ana had never heard of, when Ana felt Pennywise coming. Being preoccupied with worrying about Ronnie and Heather, and now watching over this little girl, she had completely forgotten that at some point, he would come looking for her. As she waited for a sign that the clown was near, she started to plan her argument in her head as to why she couldn't come home right now. This lost little lamb needed her, and she was going to stay.

Ana was so wrapped up in her own thoughts right then, that it took her a few moments to realize that something was off. She noticed that Abigail was staring out the door of the ambulance and into the night, and she was about to ask her what was wrong when she noticed that everything was now silent. No sirens, no distant shrieking or sobbing, no rumble of the fire that blazed on mercilessly. It was as if someone had a remote that controlled all of the

background noise, and they had hit the mute button.

She found herself staring into the dark night, just like the child seated next to her, but unable to see anything. Every instinct told her to get up and shut the doors, but it was almost like she was paralyzed. It wasn't quite fear, as her nerves were always competing with the contentment that always ran through her veins when a certain alien was close. But as her blue eyes remained fixed on the blackness outside the emergency vehicle, she couldn't help but hold her breath in anticipation.

The silence was broken finally by Abigail's screams, and Ana didn't have time to turn to the girl to comfort her; their previous view of the undisturbed twilight was overtaken by the appearance of angry orange and red flames. They seemed to take up the entire entrance to ambulance, leaving little hope for them to escape. As Ana snatched the wailing girl by the arm and pulled her close, her mind registered that the intruding inferno had a human shape to it, albeit an abnormally broad, impossibly tall one. She could make out the blurred outline of a mouth that snarled at them barbarically, and she identified the gleaming golden eyes rimmed with red instantly.

"The fire!" the girl was shrieking, and Ana squeezed her as tightly to her body as she could. She knew they were in an extremely perilous situation. Pennywise was absolutely famished from his decade long sleep, and she had no clue if he had already fed prior to terrorizing poor little Abigail. She knew she was lucky that he was able to restrain from killing and eating her down in the sewers, but she didn't know how long the entity could maintain that self control. But she wasn't about to let him devour this child.

"No!" She yelled at the flamed body that was starting to climb into the back of the ambulance, her voice competing with the sounds of its covetous bellows. It started to stretch out a burning limb towards them, clawed digits starting to take shape as it grew closer. Ana grabbed a fire extinguisher off its hook, the first solid thing she could see near her, and smashed it right into its growling face. It screeched in pain, the arm snapping back to its side. and for the first time, Ana had real hope that somehow she could save the little girl.

The gold eyes stared at her for a few seconds, and she pleaded with

Pennywise in her head. *Please, no. Not this one. You can't.* Finally, he let out a grunt of frustration, turning to leave, still maintaining the flaming demonic form as he walked. Abigail was a crying, nonsensical mess, but Ana still started to clamor towards the exit to follow him. She intended to stop him from eating any of the other kids that were there tonight, but just as her feet hit the ground, she collided with a warm body.

"Abigail!" she heard the man she had nearly knocked over cry, and the little girl shot into his arms. There was a woman standing right behind him, and she nearly shoved Ana out of the way to get to her child. Ana thought nothing of it, and frantically searched for the glowing form in the night so she knew which way to go. But there was no sign of him.

She didn't bother to try saying goodbye to the reunited family, knowing that she was the furthest thing from any of their minds. She couldn't will herself to go back to the burning school, deciding that whatever happened to those ill-fated people inside was out of her hands. She started to head to her family's house again since Pennywise was obviously preoccupied, the streets still littered with gawkers that didn't pay any attention to her. But suddenly she felt uneasy, like she was being watched, and she started to instinctively look around for the source of her discomfort.

There were groups of people all over, none of them looking in her direction. Most of them were talking among themselves or staring at the school. She was about to turn to continue on her way when she locked eyes with a young woman across the street, and she knew her paranoia of being watched was warranted then. The woman was facing Ana, her back to the school and all of the others around her, her eyes unblinking. She had unnaturally platinum blonde hair that fell past her shoulders, and her current outfit consisted of a black corset, a black leather skirt and fishnet stockings.

Ana raised her eyebrows at her, the ensemble sticking out like a sore thumb in this small town. She was about to call out to the woman, possibly to tell her to kindly fuck off, when her dark red lips broke into a large grin.

"Okay then," Ana mumbled to herself, not at all in the mood to start

conversing with a potentially crazy stranger, and kept walking. For a while, the feeling of being watched was still there, but the further she got, the more assured she was that she wasn't being followed by the blonde goth.

By the time she reached her destination, the odd smiling woman was pushed out of her mind. She stood on the street for a while, the house appearing to be dark and quiet. She still didn't really know what time it was, and for all she knew, the family was sound asleep in their beds. Then, a light turned on in one of the bedrooms as the house phone started to ring. She heard the muffled voice of her 'sister' answer, and then a raised voice as she reacted to some sort of bad news. Ana moved closer to the house, needing to know what was going on, if the kids were safe. She heard Derek's voice join his wife's, but not clearly enough to know what they were talking about.

Then more lights turning on. Her heart soared as she saw Cassandra and Derek enter the kitchen, followed by a red-haired teenager. They sat at the kitchen table, and then another teen appeared, a girl with long brown hair. The mood appeared to be somber as the parents delivered whatever bad news they had gotten on the phone, and Heather clapped a hand over her mouth in shock. Ana assumed that they were being told about the school, and she knew it was likely that the family knew someone that had been inside. But she couldn't shake her sense of relief.

Her walk back to Neibolt house was uneventful, something that Ana wasn't about to complain about, although she found herself wondering how long Pennywise was going to be out hunting. She couldn't sense him nearby, and she found herself disheartened at the fact at that he was probably still around the school. Seeing him terrorize poor little Abigail gave her a renewed sense of resentment for the clown, even after all the time they'd spent together. She knew it was going to be an inevitable quarrel, Ana being unable to hide her feelings from him. For a split second she hoped he was full when he came back to the house so he could be as rational as he was capable of being, then felt guilty for the people he was gorging on. As usual, she was in an infinite cycle of conflicting feelings.

She reached the house, going through the gate and walking towards the front door. In the dark of the night, it took her a little while to

realize there was something painted on it, her eyes straining to make sense of the dark shapes. She opened the door and reached inside the entryway to flip on the porch light, and bright red suddenly came into focus. In neat, cursive letters, was painted "For You". There was a little heart drawn beneath it, some of the blood that has been used as paint dripping down the ground.

3. Chapter 3

Pennywise came back from his feeding a few hours after Ana had gotten home, leaving her to pace and jump at every little noise until the cosmic entity got back to her. She knew that anyone that stumbled upon Neibolt house and didn't give in to the urge to run the other direction might be someone to contend with, let alone someone that wrote a message like that. The last time someone had come to the front door when she was there by herself, she had gotten kidnapped, and even though it was ten years ago, the incident was still fresh in her mind.

As soon as he came up from the basement, he found Ana in the kitchen, abruptly putting a halt to her incessant pacing by placing his gloved hands on her shoulders and shoving her backwards into the fridge. Ana had to force herself to break away from his lustful advances, and then leave the room to keep herself from completely forgetting about the bloody graffiti and getting lost in their activities.

"Little Ana," he purred at her, his golden eyes glinting mischievously at her as he lumbered after her, "Playing hard to get, are you, you naughty thing!"

"I'm not playing hard to get," she said, going to the entryway. "Believe me, you aren't the only one that's aware that ten years is a *long* time."

He chuckled lowly at her, coming up behind her and grabbing her upper arms so he could pull her backside up against him. She could feel his erection already jabbing her through his silk costume, and for a few moments, she let him grind his hips up against her.

"No," she said, trying to catch her breath. "I have to show you something." She yanked her extremities out his grasp, taking a few steps away from his lanky form again. He stuck out his bottom lip at her like a pouting child, but she persisted in her mission, yanking open the front door and stepping through. Sighing, Pennywise finally obliged, following her onto the porch.

"Well?" she said, looking intently at the red, dripping letters again. She clicked her tongue at him in annoyance when she caught him

staring at her chest, rather than looking at the ominous message. "Stop it!"

"What is my sweet girl angry about now?" he said, his golden eyes still fixed on her. When she crossed her arms and glowered at him, he laughed at her.

"You're always so impossible! Just look at the damn door, you *know* that I'm trying to show you - "

"You don't *need* to show me," he retorted, cutting her off and folding his arms over his chest to mock her. "I already saw it in your uptight little mind."

Ana was at a loss for words for a second or two, her mouth hanging open in disbelief at Pennywise's constant desire to irritate her. "We *just* woke up, and you're already playing mind games!"

Ruby red lips formed a mischievous smirk at her words as he stepped towards her slowly, his towering figure so close to her taking her breath away. She found herself trapped between his costumed figure and the defaced door. As he lowered his head to hers, he drawled, "What kind of games would you like to play?" The painted face was so close to hers, she could almost feel his lips brushing against her skin. He started to move closer to her, intending to pin her up against the solid wood behind her, but she reached behind her suddenly to turn the handle just as he took the step forward. Moving backwards into the entryway, the clown followed closely, his hands moving to grip her hips to keep her from getting too far away from him.

"You almost got blood on my clothes," she whispered, locking eyes with him.

A gravelly chuckle left his throat, the sound in such close proximity sending shivers down her body. "It might be a good look for you!"

She grimaced at the notion, but was quickly pulled back into their enticing exchange when his lips made delicious contact at her collarbone.

"Close the - " she started to say, but Pennywise was already kicking

the front door shut; not because he required the same feeling of privacy she did, but because he knew she wanted it. He pushed her up against the wall, making her yelp in surprise at the forcefulness of the gesture, then giggle. Continuing to suck on her neck, Pennywise started to paw at her pants, a decade of of inactivity making him nearly as ravenous to feel her as he had been earlier for actual flesh.

Not wanting him to ruin yet another article of her limited wardrobe, Ana reached down to unbutton her jeans and unceremoniously push them and her panties down at the same time. He lifted her up in the air then, yanking the obstructing cloth off her ankles and allowing her to wrap her bare legs around his slim waist. He entered her without pause then, slamming her back into the wall and making her moan at the sudden intoxicating fullness.

As he thrust into her, his pace frenzied and tantalizing, Ana completely forgot about the current reason for her uneasiness. The pair continued in their fevered coupling numerous times, using several rooms around the house before they finally stopped to rest. Somehow they had ended up on the basement floor near the well, and she laid on top of him to keep the cold floor off her naked skin.

"Seriously, though," she said through her panting, her voice now raspy from her enthusiastic cries of pleasure, "We need to talk about the door."

Pennywise was lazily trailing pale fingertips up and down her arm, his gloves lying long forgotten on a different floor of the house. "I hoped I would pound those worries right out of you," he said, a chuckle emerging from his throat.

She rolled her eyes. "Do you have any idea what that means? Who would write it?"

"Pennywise doesn't know." He grasped her arm, pulling it towards his mouth, started to nibble on her wrist. She had to stifle another groan, not wanting to encourage his distracting behavior.

"Pennywise doesn't care," she retorted.

"Maybe not," he replied quietly, pausing to sniff the pulse point that

he had just been licking. "Because Pennywise doesn't worry about such trivial things."

Ana sighed, pulling her wrist from his hand and sitting up, placing her hands on his bare chest to hold herself up. "The last time you didn't worry, you had to save me. Twice, actually, because they wanted you to kill me so they could kill you. To me, that's reason for concern!"

"And look what happened to all of them, sweet girl," he said, his arms going behind his head as he looked at her. "All of them are dead!"

Except Mike, she thought, and before she could attempt to push the thought away, he let out a low growl in indignation. "Only because I *let* him leave. That's what you do for *friends,* after all."

She decided not to acknowledge that statement, knowing that bringing the Loser up might make the clown jealous, and because she didn't want to get him off topic. "What about the fire?" she asked quietly. "It woke us up early. What if whoever wrote that message started it, and wanted you out of your deep sleep early? That sounds like someone else who wants to kill you."

"Let them try," he said, giggling.

"Penny," she said sternly, "They're going to try to kill *me* again. You're not always around to protect me, you know."

"Then come with me," he said, a wide grin forming on his painted features. "I wouldn't mind a hunting buddy!"

She fought back her grimace of disgust and her initial instinct to argue, not because she didn't detest the idea of her coming with him to terrorize and murder children, but because their conversation was heading towards a topic that she had wanted to tackle at some point anyway. The trouble was, she didn't know how she was going to approach it without potentially enraging him.

Ana had to start talking quickly, before he read it in her mind and got pissed off anyway. She cleared her throat, and pushed on. "I want you to stop eating children," she blurted, using every ounce of

bravery she could muster to keep her eyes on his. Pennywise was silent for a few moments, and she could feel her heart start to race in her chest as she waited for a reaction.

He laughed, his arms coming out from behind his head and coming to grasp her wrists.

"I'm serious," she urged, not sure if he could hear her through his guffaws of amusement.

"I know!" he exclaimed.

"Well, jeez, stop laughing, would you?" she mumbled, and his giggles started to die down.

"And what, sweet girl, would you have me eat instead?"

"Um..." she started, wondering if his question was some sort of trick, "Adults?"

"What's the difference?" he asked, still giggling between his words. "Humans are all the same, aren't they? They're corrupted, hateful little creatures and age doesn't change that!"

"Except kids *aren't* corrupted," she argued. "They're innocent. That's the difference."

"Give them a few years. It's all the same."

"It's *not* the same. This is important to me," she said, willing herself to press on. "When I saw you go after that little girl in the ambulance, it made part of me hate you all over again." The laughter completely died in his face then. No matter how confident the Eater of Worlds appeared to be, she knew he didn't handle her disapproval all that well. He stared at her silently then, his golden eyes unblinking as he searched her mind. "Doesn't the fear taste the same anyway, whether they're kids or not?"

"Yes," he grunted, his somber face frowning at her. "Kids' fears are just easier for me to manifest."

"Well, there you go," she said, hopeful that she was actually getting

through to him, that he cared enough about her to listen to her proposal. "Yeah, grown ups might be more afraid of arbitrary things, but it sure as hell doesn't mean they can't be scared by the same things you're used to using on kids. It just might take a little more...creativity."

"That's now how I'm used to feeding," he replied lowly.

"You're also not used to having a partner," she pointed out, giving him a small smile. "But I think you've proved you can adapt to some changes."

"Partner," he muttered quietly, and then she saw something flash across his features. Even before he opened his red lips to reply, she knew she regretted using that term. "Yes, *partner*. Okay, Pennywise will agree to your crazy idea. But!" he barked, starting to laugh again. "*Only* if you come with me!"

"What?" she gasped, and he laughed even louder.

"Yes, little Ana will have to come with hunting! And pick out my meals!"

"No," she said right away, and then squealed as he wrapped his arms around her and stood, starting to carry her up the stairs.

"What, is my pious little fairy too good to see it? Did your dream about Daddy give you a renewed sense of superiority over all of this?"

"Don't you dare throw that in my face," she snarled, and he rewarded her with a smart smack to her naked behind.

"I think I'll have you decide *who* I'm going to eat," he continued as they started to go up the stairs to the second floor. "After all, I wouldn't want to kill the wrong person and have you hate me all over again!"

"I am *not* choosing who you kill - " she started, her thoughts interrupted as he bit into her shoulder, although not hard enough to draw blood. They entered the bedroom, and he dropped her ungracefully onto the bed, not wasting any time to crawl over her with his long, menacing form.

"Remember that you're not the innocent little girl you're telling yourself you are. You're a killer, just like me!" he giggled, planting a slobbery kiss on her lips. She wanted to protest, every cell in her body enraged at his words and ready to fight, but once again was distracted by his advances.

Had the couple not been so wrapped up in their fight and then their passionate make up session, one of them might have sensed the girl with the platinum blonde hair standing across the street, glaring up at the window that belonged to the room they were currently in. She didn't blink as she stared, her hands balled into fists so hard that she was making herself bleed.

4. Chapter 4

The sky was void of any cloud coverage, and the sun shined brightly in their faces as they walked to the grocery store the next morning. The environment around them appeared to be delightful and unassuming, no initial signs apparent of what had taken place only hours earlier. It was only when they got closer to downtown and could see the black smoke curling towards the clear blue sky that there was evidence of anything amiss. Ana had every intention of trying to find out more about the school fire once she and Robert got into town. Derry being a rather small community, she assumed that almost anyone they came across would probably know some more details about the disaster.

They had only made it to the first aisle of the supermarket before Ana overheard a conversation about it. Two elderly women were stationed in front of the canned soup section, not bothering to lower their voices or try to keep their murmurs private.

"The fire marshal has never seen anything like it, I heard. Nothing this tragic in his twenty-five years."

"Well, it's not a very common thing, is it? For that many to go missing from one building? Where could they possibly have gone to?'

"Janet threw out the possibility that maybe they just burned up and turned to ash. If the fire was hot enough - "

"That's absurd. They'd still be able to find teeth, wouldn't they? Greg heard from his son-in-law, who was there pulling out bodies, that there was nothing of the sort."

"But it's only morning, isn't it? Maybe they just need more time to look."

"I think, if there were remains left from that many missing bodies they would have seen it by now."

Ana was unabashedly staring at the women by this point, her mouth hanging open in shock in that revelation. "Excuse me, ma'am," she

said, walking closer to them and addressing the last one who had spoken, "I was eavesdropping, I admit, but I haven't heard any of this. *How* many kids are missing?"

"Oh, you young kids shouldn't get up so late in the morning, wastes your whole day away. If you get up early like we do, you would know this stuff already," the old woman replied, her wrinkly face scrunching up in obvious disapproval.

"Now, now, Karen," the other one butt in, looking first at Ana and then at Robert, who had slowly followed Ana over to where they were standing. He was staring at the row of canned chicken noodle soup, appearing to be completely disinterested in the entire conversation. "Maybe these youngsters were *enjoying* their morning, as young married couples do. You remember what that was like, don't you? Or has Floyd been dead for too long?"

Karen was now outwardly frowning at Ana. "I don't recall seeing you two around here before. Did you just move to town?"

"You could say that," Ana replied dryly. "But the children, how - "

"You *are* married, aren't you?" Karen continued, and Ana could feel her patience wearing dangerously thin. The geriatric eyes were now traveling to Ana's left hand, then to Robert's, who had abandoned reading the can labels and was glowering at the judgmental pair.

"We're shacked up in the old house on the end of Neibolt street," Robert said, and Ana gave him a surprised side glance. "We host orgies there every Wednesday night. You aren't our normal age demographic, but we're always open to new types of kink, if you ladies would consider joining us." He flashed them his handsome smile, and both Karen and her companion let out of sounds of apparent disgust as they turned away.

Ana smacked his arm, swallowing down the laughter that was threatening to bubble up from her throat. "Where did that come from?"

"The one with the bad perm participated in many sessions of group fornication when she was younger," he replied, not bothering to

lower his voice. A middle-aged man with a green smock looked at Robert in curiosity, obviously overhearing his derogatory declaration, and nearly crashed into a customer's shopping cart.

"Well, there goes my source of information," Ana sighed, tossing a few cans into their basket and heading to the next aisle.

"You don't need to bother with interrogating the charming residents of Derry," he replied. "I saw everything they knew. There are twelve missing children, and seventeen confirmed dead from the fire."

Ana clapped her hand to her mouth in shock. "Oh my god! That's awful." Before she could stop herself, her mind immediately began to wonder about how the twelve went missing. "Penny, how many did you...?"

"Two."

"Really? That's all?" she questioned, and she saw annoyance flash across his beautiful features.

"What reason would I have to lie to you?" he said, his blue eyes glaring at her.

"Alright, alright," she replied, placing a gentle hand on his upper arm, "I'm sorry for questioning you, but I just thought with us being asleep for that long that you'd need something...more."

"Under normal circumstances I would have harvested a few more," Robert said, and his hardened expression softened slightly as he looked down at her. "But I had other urges that I wanted to satisfy." Ana blushed, knowing what he was indicating, and he was grinning at her now. "You always want to act so innocent, my sweet girl."

"Shopping for groceries is supposed to be a wholesome experience," she replied, the heat in her face leaving her even more embarrassed and unwilling to meet his gaze. "So far we've scared off a couple of old ladies with orgy talk, discussed how many kids you ate last night and now we're talking about *that."*

"Just wait until we're 'shopping' for my food," he growled suggestively, and the humor died in Ana's demeanor instantly at the

thought of her having to help him. He must have sensed her apprehension right away. "Oh, come on now, little fairy. At some point you're going to have to acknowledge that this is the norm."

"Even if I go along with this plan of yours, it doesn't mean I'm going to get used to it."

"Don't kid yourself, Ana. You've already gotten *'used to'* a lot more than your pure little self would have ever thought possible."

She wanted to argue with him, but she knew he was right. It made her hate him a little.

They continued on with their shopping trip, now going about their task with far less playful banter involved. Ana's thoughts went from having to go with Pennywise hunting, to the missing and dead children from the school. "Twenty-seven," she muttered to herself as they stood in line to check out. A mom with her toddler in tow smiled at Robert as they walked by, and he returned the grin, though his eyes were locked on the child. Ana didn't notice the exchange.

"Twenty-nine," he corrected, his head swiveling to watch the mother and offspring leave the store.

"Stop it," she said, finally noticing what he was watching, an unsaid warning in her words, "and no, you took two, which makes twenty-seven."

"A solid number," Robert mused after his head returned to looking forward. She knew he was toying with her, undoubtedly sensing what she was indicating, but pretending he was clueless.

"There's no doubt in my mind now," she said quietly, and they reached the cash register. She stayed quiet during the transaction, even with knowing the cashier would probably forgot hers and Robert's conversation even if he heard it. Once they went out of the store, she continued. "Whoever wrote that on the door definitely started the fire to wake you up."

"Or wake *us* up," he added, but Ana shook her head.

"Twenty-seven is a number associated with you. Why would anyone

who knows that even bother with me? Or know that I was down there with you?"

"Maybe it was our dear old friend Mike," Robert replied, and he sounded absolutely pleased at the notion. "Perhaps he's come to play again!"

"Mike would never intentionally kill a bunch of kids just to get to you," she snapped, and she found herself the target of his glare once again.

"Little Ana, you sure do think highly of him, don't you?"

"You know I'm right," she countered, growing irritated at the entity's unfounded jealousy. They walked past a preteen boy that was skate boarding down the sidewalk, and once again Robert's head turned to follow him. This time, when Ana scolded him and he looked down at her, she caught some drool glistening on his chin.

"You just ate last night," she said, knowing the point was mute, as he had eaten almost daily the last time he was awake.

"Yes, but there's a blanket of fear on everyone today," he said, wiping the drool away as she eyed his face. "Nearly everyone we've come across has smelled delicious. They're all thinking about the fire."

She cocked a half smile as she thought of the two elderly ladies from the grocery store and their extremely outdated shrewdness.

"You want me to eat one of them?" he asked, answering her musings, his question sounding both amused and slightly grossed out.

"No, no," she said, shaking her head and trying to hide her grin unsuccessfully. "Rudeness and participating in orgies fifty years ago doesn't fit the criteria."

Robert look puzzled then, and she knew this conversation was about to approach the subject she had been ignorantly trying to avoid. "So what does fit your criteria?" he asked, seeming to be genuinely curious. "What makes someone worthy of being my meal in your pompous little perspective?"

"Do you think I think I'm superior?" she challenged as they continued their walk back home. "That I think I have the right to pass judgment on these people?"

"Well, yes," he replied, "As that's what you're going to be doing."

She shook her head and scoffed in disbelief. "I don't think I'm above any of them. I just have morals, ones that dictate that killing innocents is wrong."

"*You* killed that monk lady yourself, and she was acting under the belief that what she was doing was right."

"She threatened to kill my family. None of that was right. And she was doing it under the assumption that her orders were coming from Maturin, not some evil lizard-demon."

"But doesn't that make it even more *wrong* for you to kill her for it? Doesn't that make her innocent, since she was tricked by *evil?*" Ana was silent in her inability to come up with a quick reply, knowing that he had discredited her arguments. "Oh, come on, sweet girl. Don't tell me I've stumped you, even with all your precious morals to back you up."

"What's with this philosophy lesson all of a sudden?" she hissed back. "I thought that you enjoyed the fact that I killed her."

Robert frowned slightly, and he grabbed her hand and pulled her closer to him, as she had been increasing the distance between them as they argued. "I do enjoy that. I enjoy that very much." Then his long arm went around her shoulders, pulling her closer to him still. "Sweet girl, don't start to feel guilty about it now!"

"Too late," she muttered.

"I'm trying to understand this. It doesn't make sense to me."

She sighed, turning to look up at the handsome face that was still frowning as they walked. "I know. And thank you for trying to understand it."

"I know of a way that you can *thank* me," he replied, his lips changing

quickly into a suggestive grin.

"You'll just have to wait until we get home," she said, knowing they were still a few blocks away. He suddenly pulled her off of the sidewalk, his arm that was still around her guiding them up a driveway and then around a large white house. As they entered the back yard, Robert nonchalantly dropped their bags of groceries to the ground, then gently pushed Ana up against the trunk of a large willow tree.

"Someone is going to see us!" Ana protested, shivers going down her spine as he started to paw at her.

"No one is home, sweet girl," he purred in her ear. Ana bit her lip as she surveyed the yard, noting the large amount of trees and other vegetation that shielded them from any unsuspecting neighbor's view. Just as she conceded to the idea and started to relax, Robert started to giggle.

"Always so pleased with yourself, aren't you?" she teased, her breath starting to catch in her throat as he unzipped and pushed down her pants. She started to undress the lower half of his body as well, and soon he was pumping into her, the bark from the tree scraping her naked skin as they moved. It was one of their quicker sessions, but already Ana was thinking about jumping into round two as soon as they got back to the house.

As Ana bent down to pull her pants back up, she noticed that Robert's eyebrows were suddenly furrowed, making him look contemplative.

"What?" she asked, still working to catch her breath. "Don't tell me someone saw us."

He shook his head, his eyes locking with hers, his face all seriousness now. "There's a man one house down. I think he might fit your criteria."

"Oh," she said quietly, wanting but not wanting to know at the same time. "In what way?"

"He killed his wife. Choked her with his hands, burned down their

old house for the insurance money with her body in it. The school fire is making him think about it a lot today."

"Oh, God," she groaned, her stomach turning over in shock from the abrupt changes in her emotion. "Recently?"

"Eight years ago. Does it matter?" he giggled, making her want to slap him suddenly.

"No, I suppose not," she said, her hands running through her hair nervously. "I just...I'm having a bit of a hard time giving you the green light on killing someone."

"I've gotta eat sometime today," he reminded her, his wide grin making her want to smack him even more. "Would you rather wait and see if we can find someone more deplorable?"

"Why don't you change back into Pennywise," she snapped. "Robert is being a lot more conversational than I can put up with today."

"Oh, don't you worry. I'm going to be changing into a lot more than the clown today. If you're okay with it, that is," he said, winking. She knew he had already seen her decision, that she knew that it had to happen. He was just teasing a verbal answer out of her.

She took a deep breath, hating herself even before she spoke. "Yes."

Robert grabbed her hand, starting to pull her towards the sidewalk.

"Wait, you want to go now?" she asked, trying to stop walking as he yanked her along.

"There's no reason not to!"

"The groceries," she said, pleased that she had found an excuse to stall. "The frozen stuff is probably already melting."

Robert stopped, giving her an 'are you kidding me' look. "Fine. We'll go to the house and put your food in the freezer. But then we're coming right back."

They did just that. As they were in the house, Ana debated trying to

seduce him for round two, but he shut it down before she even finished the thought by stepping onto the porch. As they started their journey back to the victim's house, Ana started to weigh how dangerous it might be for her to stay home and let Pennywise to his hunt, as they had already picked out his prey. Then she thought back to the message on the door, and the fact that whoever wrote it had no problem lighting an elementary school on fire, and she knew she would be stupid to take that chance.

"Don't fret, sweet girl," Robert told her as they neared the house that contained his next meal. "Remember what I'd be eating if you weren't making me have this guy."

"Okay," she said staring up at the house, wondering who this man was. The sky was still a clear blue, and birds were chirping happily in a tree near them. She looked at Robert, and he was doing the same.

"So," he said, casually putting his hands in his pockets as if to mock her anxiety, "What do you think might scare the shit out of this guy?"

"I don't know," she said, startling at the sound of a car backfiring a few streets away. "Probably something he was scared of when he was little. Most people think they're over their childhood fears, but I'd put money that if it came at them in the flesh..."

"Got it," Robert said, rocking back and forth on his feet.

"Or you could just be his dead wife," she added, the sickening idea feeling righteous somehow, her nerves calming a bit.

He nodded at her, giving her a cocky smile. "I'll open the back door. You'll be safest in the house with me." Before she could protest the idea, he was gone, and she started to look around frantically, initially surprised at how quickly he could disappear, then knowing she needed to stay near him if she didn't want to be potentially kidnapped or killed.

Ana quickly rounded the house, trying to be as quiet as possible as she went up the steps that led up to the deck. As she looked in the window that showed into the dining room, she strained to see if she could catch a glimpse of the doomed man. At first, there was no

obvious movement in the house. She stared in silence, then jumped when she saw a tall form suddenly appear in the window. It bent down to look through the glass back at her, and she stepped towards the door as soon as she saw the white painted face with its grinning red lips.

She opened the door slowly, and when she stepped into the house, found that Pennywise was once again nowhere to be seen. Her heart started to beat wildly when she realized she was breaking and entering into the house of a known killer. Robert had told her she'd be safer in here, and yet here she stood, defenseless, knowing that if the man had been able to kill his own wife, he probably wouldn't hesitate to kill a strange girl that was suddenly standing in his house.

She heard footsteps in the next room, then a loud belch as the homeowner moved about. Crouching down behind a wooden chair, she knew it might only be a matter of seconds before he noticed her if he entered the room now. She was debating trying to get out the back door as she heard him walk closer, when she suddenly heard the man gasp in shock, and something loud drop to the floor.

"M - Mary - " she heard him stutter in the next room. "Mary! How is this possible?"

"Gene, don't you miss me?" came the croak of a woman's voice in reply. "I've been at our house for so long waiting for you to come home!"

"You c-can't be here!" Gene was shouting now. Ana couldn't help herself, and stood to creep forward, her curiosity getting the best of her as this man was reduced to a stuttering mess at the sight of his dead wife. "You can't be! You're dead!"

"What are you talking about, Gene? I'm right here! Don't you love me?"

Ana got close to the threshold, peaking through in time to see the man trip and fall backwards. A woman in a long nightdress was inching forward, holding her hand out to him as if to touch him. Just as her fingers neared the man's knee, they started to turn black, as if they had been charred in a fire. Gene's eyes went from her hand to

her face, and her skin was starting to turn red, then quickly blister, and finally start to melt off and reveal the white skeleton beneath.

Gene was screaming in terror now. He managed to crawl to his hands and knees and then stand, running away from the disturbing image of his wife. Ana heard him pound up the stairs, and she entered the kitchen where it all had been taking place. But it was empty, Pennywise likely in pursuit of the man.

Part of her wanted to see it. But she was frozen in place as she heard more screaming from the second floor, and then a gurgling cry as if his throat had been bitten into. She heard a thud, wondering if Gene's obese form had hit the floor. The assumptions and images that came with them were horrifying enough, and instead of going upstairs, Ana decided to retreat back to the dining room, taking a seat in the chair she had previously hidden behind as her lover devoured his meal.

5. Chapter 5

Ana wanted to get out of the wife-killer's house as soon as she possibly could, the minutes that Pennywise had taken to eat his fill feeling like hours. She had stayed planted in the chair the entire time, her body shaking to the point that she didn't trust her legs to support her weight if she dared to stand up. The clown wandered downstairs after he was finished, and the first thing she noticed when he entered the room was the bright red blood covering his face and frilled collar. He approached her right away, coming to stand in front her and then bend down towards her face, and she shrunk away from him.

"Please," she said, turning away from the bodily fluid-smeared face that was inches away from her, "I can't."

"Just one little kiss?" Pennywise asked, pursing his lips together and pushing them out at her dramatically. A drop of blood dripped from his mouth and onto her lap. "We should celebrate our first hunt together!"

"I didn't do any hunting," she protested, and slid sideways off the chair so she could stand further away form him. She had to steady herself by gripping the table.

"Nonsense!" Pennywise chirped, beaming at her proudly. "From now on, this is a team effort, *partner*."

"So you want me to take credit? Is that it?" she asked, and felt herself sway a bit. Ever the attentive cosmic creature, Pennywise was by her side in a flash, his gloved hands going to her waist to steady her as her body threatened to go limp. "I need to get out of this house," she croaked, and her stomach was threatening to vacate the last meal she had consumed right onto the dead man's floor. Pennywise guided her towards the back door, and as soon as she hit the fresh air, her guts started to settle down.

"What do we do with the body?" she asked after she was somewhat sure that she wouldn't hurl as soon as she tried to speak.

"I'll bring it down to the sewers."

"How?"

"I'll carry it."

"What? Won't someone notice?"

Pennywise cocked an eyebrow at her question, and he started to emanate annoyance rather than haughtiness. "I do it all the time."

Ana sighed, nodding as she realized she should know as much. If the clown didn't want to be noticed as he carried a mangled corpse down the street, then no citizen of Derry was going to be able to see through the charade. What restarted the waves of nausea again, was when she pictured having to walk with him as he carried murdered Gene in his arms.

One sure thing that the two could count on was their constant fluctuation of emotions between them. As much as they quarreled, they always seemed to fall back into their routine of passionate make-up sex and then resume their ambiguous companionship. Ana could try to kid herself as much as she wanted to, but she could hardly deny that she had grown quite fond of the cosmic being, although if he ever brought it up directly she knew she would probably try to argue the point. She knew Pennywise enjoyed the familiarity of her being near as much as she did, and a part of her hoped that some day, they would be able to exist together in some sort of peaceful intimacy. The barrier to that, unfortunately for Ana, was that any of her negative feelings towards him were transparent, and it was always a gamble whether or not it threatened his swollen ego.

Today, Pennywise was not reacting well to her silent disapproval. As the dread of knowing she would have to see the fresh cadaver flooded her senses, he stomped back into the house without a word. She rolled her eyes at his childish behavior, but waited for him just the same, knowing it would be stupid to try and walk back to Neibolt house alone.

She heard his footsteps as he came back through the house, and the back door slammed open as he came outside. Ana averted her eyes when she glanced at the dead body in his arms, and he let a low

growl.

"Stop avoiding it," he commanded. When she didn't obey, he dropped the body, the loud thud as it hit the ground making Ana jump and look at in surprise. She clapped a hand over her mouth and immediately turned her head away again. "Look at it!" Pennywise snarled at her.

"Why?" she asked, shaking her head as she kept her eyes glued on a nearby bush.

"This is *your* handiwork!"

"It is not - "

"This is what you wanted!" he yelled at her, and she gasped as he bounded towards her and gripped her shoulders with his large hands. She forced herself to look at him, knowing that if she didn't, she would only make him angrier. "So why am *I* the bad guy?"

"I didn't want this," she hissed back, her blue eyes glaring into golden as she felt the heat inside her grow. The clown looked just as angry as she felt right then, their exasperation for one another equal in intensity. "I didn't want any of this!"

"Fine!" Pennywise barked, letting go of her and then bending down to heave the body back into his arms. "I misunderstood you. Perhaps I should go back to eating children?" He started walking then, heading across the grass and into the yard of the next house.

"What? No, you can't - " she shouted shakily, her legs finding her footing under her as she hurried after his impossibly long strides.

"I can!" he growled in reply. "You forget, pathetic girl, that I can do whatever I please. I agreed to go along with these honorable little rules of yours, only because it means so much to *you*."

"You're right," she said, now jogging to keep up with him as they continued to cross people's yards and head towards the woods, completely unnoticed by the people they walked past. "I'm sorry, you're right."

"You're telling me what you think I want to hear," he said, glowering as he continued on.

"God damnit, Pennywise!" she yelled, and she ran to get in front of him, then stopped, putting her hands out towards him to try to get him to stop. "What do you want from me?"

He halted instantly, dropped the body roughly again. "I want you to accept this!" He pointed to the remains of his meal, and she stared at him silently for a few moments as she contemplated giving into his request or not. "Why was it okay for me to kill the monks? Why was it okay for me to kill Asmod?"

It hit her completely then, what Pennywise was trying to tell her. Even with his childlike mentality, and his primal urges to function mainly on instinct, he was calling her out on her selfish reasoning for when his killing was justified, and when it wasn't. "I'm sorry. I get why this is frustrating for you. I'm asking you to go against your nature, to stop what you've been doing for billions of years. I realize now how difficult that must be for you, and the willpower it must take to do what I'm asking."

"Stop talking to me like I'm an infant," he growled back at her, his volume immensely lowered as he leered at her. The statement made her think of a child's response, and her expression softened as she looked up at his furious expression.

"But you have to understand, Penny. All of this is against my nature, too - "

"You don't even remember what it was like being a fairy. You just assume this is against your nature." He caught her completely off guard then, yet again his statement ringing true. "But I see what you think and feel and dream. Sometimes you want to kill someone because their death would please you, like the woman you strangled."

"And you kill to feed. And to protect me," she said softly. "I'm sorry. I'm going to try harder to accept...you."

He continued to glare at her for a few moments, and then grunted before picking up the manhandled carcass and continuing his journey

to the sewers. She followed him silently for some time, and they made their way through the trees, then to the Barrens, and then finally into the sewers. The last time Ana had gone through that entrance was when she had chased down and killed the woman that had nearly drowned Ronnie. The memory gave her a sickening sense of gratification, and she was starting to see why Pennywise was disputing her sense of morality.

She tried her best to keep up with his lumbering pace as he splashed through the water, the dark and ominous environment making her want to stick close to the shape shifter. She giggled softly as she thought of how ironic it was that she felt safest when with a monster that specialized in morphing into people's worst fears, a reminder that the situation she was in was nothing short of bizarre.

"Penny," she said softly as they neared the cavern where he kept his floating bodies, "are those two kids from the elementary school floating right now?"

"Yes," he replied gruffly. "Where else would they be?"

"I just...I can't look at them, I just can't." She thought he would let out a loud irksome sigh, or perhaps snarl at her in anger again.

"Alright. Close your eyes," he said, and she obeyed immediately, a wave of gratitude washing over her at his restrained response. She stood in the cold water for several minutes before she felt his gloved hand grab hers. "Keep them closed," he said, then hoisted her up into his arms as they made their way back up to the house.

Once again, the pair concluded their fighting with a lengthy round of screwing, this time only making it as far as the kitchen. Ana was never really plagued with coherent thoughts when they were in the midst of their passion, but as soon as they were done and lying panting on the wooden floor, her mind immediately went back to Pennywise's apparent need for her acceptance. She knew she had been taking his efforts to please her for granted, and once again felt like an idiot for the clown having to point it out to her.

"Just because you're an angelic little fairy doesn't make you the expert," Pennywise mumbled, his golden eyes searching hers.

"I'm hardly angelic," she said, letting out a huff as she sat up. "And yes, you're right. I'm not the expert on feelings. But I wouldn't call you one either."

"I am the - " he started to say, and she let out a mocking, "*Superior being!"* at the same time he did. She started to laugh, and Pennywise's glaring face broke into a large grin as well.

Ana decided she wanted to partake in a new activity afterwards. She had purchased the ingredients to make potato chowder when they had gone shopping earlier, thinking that cooking was something that she could try to engage Pennywise in. She announced her intentions as she stood to find her discarded clothing, and the Eater of Worlds scrunched up his nose at the very idea.

"Why would I want to make something that I won't eat?" he groaned, the protest reminding Ana of a teenager that had been asked to take out the trash.

"You *could* eat it," she argued. "Have you even tasted human food?"

"Yeah, and it's bland and boring and like ash in my mouth.

"No matter," Ana said, pulling her shirt over her head. "You can still help me. It'll be fun!"

Pennywise continued to be unimpressed as she started pulling out the necessary pots and pans. He sniffed one of the whole potatoes as she placed them in the sink to wash them, and he grimaced and flinched away from it like it had some sort of offensive stench. The only thing that peaked his interest while she was prepping ingredients was the bacon that she pulled out of the package and started to fry in a pan.

"This is raw flesh," he said, sniffing at the pan as the pork started to sizzle.

"Yes it is. It's pork. Pig."

"Why are you mutilating it with heat?"

"I have to cook it. If I eat it raw I could get a parasite."

"You creatures are so pitiful," he mused. She dared not remind him that he fell gravely ill when he had visited her home dimension and ate some of the fairies, but he must have caught the thought anyway. She heard him growl at her, but she continued on with her cooking.

"Can you help me chop the potatoes?" she asked sweetly, giving him an overcompensating smile as she gestured at the vegetables that were sitting on the cutting board. She picked up the knife and showed him what size to cut the pieces to, then tried to hand the utensil to him to use. Instead, his hand started to morph into a blade, and he started to hack at the potatoes so forcefully that some of the pieces started to fly in the air. Ana couldn't help but laugh, especially when she noticed chunks of potato sticking to Pennywise's costume.

"Thanks, Penny," she giggled, scooping up the pieces and placing them into the pot of boiling water.

"Now what are you doing?"

"Boiling them."

"This is all rather barbaric, isn't it?" he said, grinning as she picked pieces of potato out of his frilled collar.

"I suppose you could look at it that way."

When the soup was done, Ana scooped up two bowls and brought them to the dining room table. Pennywise stayed planted in the kitchen, a blank stare plastered on his features as he watched her. "Come and sit," she said, gesturing towards the chair next to her. He walked into the room, then yanked the chair away from the table so he could awkwardly sit.

"Why are we playing house?" he asked, frowning down at the steaming bowl of soup.

"We're not playing house," she said, putting some crackers in her bowl. "I just wanted a bit of normalcy, and this is what people do. They make their meals and sit down together to eat them."

"Oh."

"You don't have to eat it," she said, and the clown immediately pushed the offensive dish further away from him. He watched her eat a few spoonfuls, then started scooting the chair closer and closer to her until his leg was pushing up against hers. He leaned over, giving her hair a long sniff.

"I'd much rather smell you, instead of this boiling pile of mush," he purred into her ear. She couldn't help but giggle at him. "And speaking of 'making meals', we're going out hunting tonight."

Ana's stomach started to churn, and she pushed away her initial reaction, which was to argue. "But, you just ate this morning - "

"I won't eat tonight. But I want to find my next meal, maybe give it a little scare tonight. Then I'll go back to it tomorrow."

She nodded at him slowly. She knew he liked to spend some time terrorizing his victims, as the extra fear made them taste a lot better to him. But she was disappointed, as she had been hoping that they could avoid the activity altogether for the rest of the day. "Do you have someone in mind?"

"No."

Pennywise asked her on her input on where to go to look for someone, and at first Ana was irked, once again not wanting to be so responsible for his choice of who he killed. But she soon realized that he was merely wanting her to be involved, his desire for a partner in all this driving him to ask her for her opinions. They settled on going to one of the bars, and after Ana had finished cleaning up the kitchen and taken a shower, they were heading back to town.

"I think I'm going to get a few drinks," Ana said as she walked hand in hand with Robert. He had chosen to go in his human form after Ana had expressed the desire to actually try and enjoy tonight's bar scene, and she didn't want to appear to be talking to herself when she interacted with the eldritch creature. Pennywise had wondered if he could just go as himself, but Ana reassured him that the presence of a tall, rather ominous looking clown sitting at the bar probably would freak people out more than anything else.

"Uh oh," Robert teased. "You're going to get drunk and manhandle me tonight, aren't you?"

"Like you aren't hoping for that," she clapped back, and he let go of her hand to try to pinch her butt. She shrieked in laughter, starting to run ahead of him down the street. As they continued with their playful PDA, Ana didn't notice the man that was watching them from across the street.

Robert's demeanor changed, as he stopped trying to pinch her and suddenly matched her stride, then threw an arm around her shoulders to pull her close. Ana saw him staring, and turned her head in that direction, seeing a man that looked to be approximately in his thirties with long, brown hair swept back into a bun. He was walking down the sidewalk in the direction of the Blueberry Moose, one of the bars that had been built in the ten years that Pennywise and Ana had been asleep.

"What's going on?" Ana asked, and Robert pulled her tighter to him as he continued to scrutinize the stranger.

"That one," he replied, nodding in man-bun's direction. "I think he might be our winner."

"Okay. Lay it on me."

"He was hoping we'd go into the bar with him. That I'd get drunk enough to not pay attention to you so he could put something in your drink. He wants to drag you behind the bar, where he has a car waiting - "

"Okay, I've got it. I don't want to hear any more," she said, feeling nervous now that she knew she was potentially this man's target. "Has he done it before?"

"It doesn't matter. Screw playing with him tonight, I'll kill him just for imaging doing that shit to you!"

"Well, maybe the sick fuck deserves a longer chase," she said, and Robert finally looked down at her, surprise etched on his features. "As long as we know he won't do it to anyone else tonight."

They entered the bar, and inside were a lot more patrons than Ana could ever have thought possible. She never really thought of Derry as a hotspot for college age kids, yet here they were, the bar packed full of them. Ana pulled Robert towards two empty bar stools, and he started to survey the crowd as soon as he sat down. Ana kept an eye out for her wannabe-rapist, but also hoping the bartender would serve them soon, as she was craving a beer.

"Oh," Robert said in her ear, placing a large hand on her knee as he spoke, "There is so much potential in here!"

"Like what?" Ana asked, looking around at all of the people around her, some dancing, some talking, others looking so drunk they could barely stay upright. Along with the seemingly out of place twenty-something year olds were many middle aged people, ones she would assume lived here in Derry. She was curious to see if Pennywise had a good sense of what she considered to be bad enough to warrant him eating them.

"Well, look at that fellow," Robert said, pointing at one man. "That one has molested his toddler niece and threatened to kill her if she tells anyone."

"Yeah, he's dinner," she said, glaring at the man. But her attention was drawn to another when Robert pointed again.

"That one sells methamphetamine here in Derry."

"I don't know...maybe."

"He's killed dealers that work under him."

"Okay. He's in."

"That one beats and starves one of his kids. That one is a doctor and intentionally withholds medical treatment to people of color. That one holds down a mistress and still rapes his wife a few times a month."

"Oh my god," Ana groaned. "What is wrong with people?"

"Like I've told you, sweet girl. Humans are hateful, wicked little

creatures."

The bartender acknowledged them then, and Ana ordered two bottles of beer for them. He was about to turn away, when she ordered two shots of whiskey last second as well. "So from what you're telling me, we should be able to kill anyone and everyone in here."

"That's up to you, sweet girl. You know I wouldn't be opposed to that," he replied, leaning down to kiss her neck. The bartender put the drinks in front of them, and Ana immediately threw back her shot.

"Here," she said, picking up the other and trying to hand it to Robert.

"I don't consume alcohol," he said, pushing her hand back towards her. She shrugged, downing the whiskey in one gulp.

"Guess these are for me!" she said, holding a beer in each hand.

"Your girl looks like she knows how to have a good time," came a voice from behind them, and Ana swiveled around on her stool, coming face to face with the guy with the bun. Up close, she saw his crooked, yellow teeth and the scraggly mustache that he was trying to grow, and it made her want to punch him in his disgusting face. "Why don't I buy you a round, friend? It looks like she's keeping all the booze to herself."

Robert turned around to face him then, and Ana knew instantly that he was going to have a hard time keeping from killing this guy right then and there. "Oh, *friend*, but you certainly know how to have a good time, don't you?" The creepy man's grin wavered as Robert glared at him. "As soon as I look in the wrong direction, you're going to try to put your cowardly little paws on her, aren't you?" The man took a few steps back, and Robert's hand shot out to grab the man by the throat, black claws starting to take shape and dig into his skin. "But you don't realize, *friend*, that I never look away."

"Robert!" Ana said, trying to get his attention, as people were starting to stop what they were doing and stare at them. The man's fear must have started to grow, because Robert was drooling now.

He let go suddenly, and the man wheezed as he stumbled away from them. Everyone who had been looking at the scene went back to what they were doing, Pennywise's hold over the perception of Derry's residents as strong as ever.

"I thought you were going to kill him right then," Ana said, taking another swig of her beer.

"I was going to. But I think I'm going to play with him first."

Ana looked up at him, the undeniable feeling of admiration running through her. She reached towards his face, slowly dragging a thumb across his bottom lip to wipe off the saliva that was still there. "I'm so turned on right now."

Robert smirked at her. "You sure it's not just the booze talking?"

"Maybe," she said, giggling. As she took another drink of her beer, she started to feel the effects of the alcohol, suddenly feeling much more at ease in the presence of so many evil people around her. "You're just so damn *protective*."

"Do you like that about me?" he asked, looking ever more amused as she complimented him.

"Mmhmm," she said. She noticed a trio of girls, all dressed in small pieces of cloth that tried to resemble clothing, looking over at them. As Ana looked closer, she saw that they were eyeing Robert, so she grabbed his face and pulled it towards her, kissing him with so much fervor that she nearly fell off her stool. When she finished marking her territory, she looked at the girls again, satisfied to see that they were all excitedly whispering among themselves and one was shooting daggers at her with her eyes.

"I have to pee," she announced then, slowly getting off the stool, keeping her hands on his thighs as she stood. "Can you get me another shot?"

She didn't hear whether or not he agreed to her request, the loud music thumping around her as she made her way to the bathroom. There was a small group of people on the dance floor, and she

debated whether or not she wanted to partake in that as well when she was done relieving herself.

As she looked at herself mirror after washing her hands, she felt a growing sense of uneasiness come through, even with the alcohol in her blood. She looked around the bathroom, only seeing one girl that had just walked past her and enter a stall. Even in her increasingly drunken state, she knew she should get back to Robert, and she left the bathroom to do just that.

She caught sight of him immediately, still sitting on the bar stool and quietly looking around the crowd. She smiled, thinking to herself how lucky she was to have him, when she saw the creepy sexual predator from before making his way towards the back exit of the bar. She would have just let him go, except there was a girl following him, and she recognized her instantly. She was dressed head to toe in black, and her platinum blonde hair was tied up in a loose ponytail. Against her better judgment, she started to push through the crowd to chase after them, the whiskey telling her she didn't need Robert's aid to protect this girl, that there wasn't time to fetch him.

She went through the back exit and into the dark night, hoping to catch them before he could do anything to the goth girl. When she didn't see them in the alley anywhere, she started to wander away from the bar. There was a tan, rusting car parked on the street nearby, and she rushed to it, then turned away when she saw that there was no one inside.

"Hello?" she called, making her way back towards the bar. "Blonde chick? Are you okay?" She nearly tripped, and looked down to see that she had collided with a body. It took a few seconds for her vision to focus on the image, and she saw that man-bun was lying on the ground in front of her, his throat ripped out and blood pooling underneath him.

Ana gasped, then started to run as straight as she could back to the door of the bar. If Robert had done it, he would have shown himself to her, so she knew someone else was responsible for this man's demise. She needed to get back to him before the same thing happened to her. She burst through the door, thankful that she had made it back into the safety of the crowd, and started to push

through the sea of drunk people to go back to her bar stool. She stopped in her tracks when she spotted Robert. He was still sitting in the same spot, but now the blonde girl was there, standing so close to him that she had a pale hand on his upper thigh, and her lips were so close to his ear that Ana was sure he could feel her breathing on him. Ana was already starting to feel enraged at their close proximity, but what really made her blood start to boil was when she saw the goth whisper something into his ear, and the Eater of Worlds smiled at her in response.

6. Chapter 6

The deafening music that was thumping throughout the cramped bar swiftly went from enjoyable to down right caustic in Ana's ears as the scene in front of her unfolded, and the inebriated patrons huddled around her that had only just given her a sense of asylum now merely maddened her further. The blonde girl's hand was advancing from Robert's thigh towards his groin, and Ana shoved a man that was standing directly in her path, knocking him into a table and causing a stir among the nearby cluster of college students.

Robert's eyes landed on Ana just as she came to stand right behind the harlot that her hands on him, and the disgruntled brunette wasted no time in gripping the long, bleached ponytail and giving it a hard yank. The girl, obviously not expecting this abrupt assault, let out a high-pitched yowl, her hands that were on Robert now flying up to her head in an attempt to free herself from the painful grasp.

"Hands off the goods, bitch!" Ana snapped, and at first all she cared to observe was Robert's amused expression as she scowled at him in displeasure, but in her periphery she glimpsed scarlet. As she turned her attention back towards the blonde whore, the girl's sneering face was staring back at her. Ana gasped as she noticed the long, pointed teeth outlined by deep purple lips, and the blood that was starting to dry on her ghostly white hands. Ana released her hold on the platinum locks, but she didn't back off at all as she looked the young woman up and down, not daring to show any signs of apprehension.

"This must be the infamous Ana," the girl said, mirroring Ana's eyes as she blatantly moved her eyes from Ana's head to toes and back again. "Dear Robert was just telling me you should be back from relieving yourself soon. Did you get lost?" Her voice was soft and smooth, and the assured, sultry tone that she was speaking in made Ana want to attack her all the more.

"I went out to the alley going after you, actually," Ana replied, folding her arms over her chest. "Tell me, how did it go with disgusting sexual predator you followed out there? Did he beg for his life before you shredded his throat?" Her eyes fell on the girl's bloodied hands with the long, pointed black talons that vaguely resembled

manicured nails.

"Why Ana, how do you know that was me?" the girl asked sweetly, batting her eyes like she was an innocent child.

"Well, it sure as hell wasn't me," Ana quipped, and the cocky woman laughed at her.

"No of course not, little fairy, but I bet you wish it had been," she said, cocking an eyebrow at her. "I bet you wish you were *capable* of such an atrocity. Best leave those sorts of thing up to us." She turned back to Robert then, her hand going to rest on his shoulder, and Ana hastily grabbed her wrist, forcing it back to her leather-clad side.

The goth laughed haughtily then. "You know, for a weak, defenseless little thing, you are feisty!"

"Touch him again," Ana said through clenched teeth, envisioning reaching behind the bar for a knife or anything else sharp and jamming into this being's jugular, "And I'll show you how feisty I can be."

The girl growled at her then, serrated teeth appearing to grow in length as she snarled at her. A bloodstained hand reached for her throat, but was stopped in its tracks by Robert, who had gone to stand between them so quickly that he seemed to not have moved. The expression of hilarity he had previous worn at the start of this interaction was completely gone now, and his own razor-like teeth were starting to make an appearance as he stared at the goth.

"Lamia," he drawled, his towering height and uncompromising glare so menacing that the previously overconfident floozy took a few steps backwards, "Ana is off limits. I'll kill you without a second thought if you try to hurt her." Ana looked at him in bewilderment, not because of his formidable threat, but because he suddenly seemed to know the goth's name. Nonetheless, she smirked in satisfaction as Lamia's demeanor shifted into complete distress, looking almost as if she was going to burst into tears. "Say you understand!" he barked at her then, and her lower lip began to quiver as she looked at him.

"I understand."

"*What* do you understand?"

"The fairy is off limits, Dominus."

Robert was still standing in between them, and Lamia had lowered her eyes to the ground as if to communicate humility. Ana's jaw almost dropped to the floor, as she was completely perplexed by the massive shift in behavior in the young woman, and was now sure that she was unquestionably unstable.

"Penny," Ana said quietly, placing a hand on his lower arm to get his attention, "Let's go home, okay?" Robert turned to look at her, his expression softening as his blue eyes met hers, and he nodded.

"But not without my gift!" came Lamia's frantic utterance, and she was looking up at the entity with such a look of optimism that Ana wanted to slap the expression right off of her eager face. "I can even carry it back for you, if you'd like, Dominus."

What the fuck is with her calling him that, Ana thought angrily, but the next words out of her mouth were, "The fuck you are." Robert cocked a half smile at her statement, then turned back to Lamia.

"No. You run along to wherever you came from."

Lamia's look of utter hopefulness wavered as she looked at Robert, but she complied, and turned to leave the bar without another word. Ana watched her intently, making damn sure that the blonde actually left the building and wasn't hanging around to follow them. Ana paid their tab, and the two started to head towards the back exit. As they neared where the dead body laid in its own pool of bodily fluids, they could see a small group of people standing around it, shrieking and waving their arms around in a panic.

"Nothing to worry about here, we'll take care of it," Robert said to them calmly as he bent down to pick up the body. As if on cue, the alarmed drunks appeared to calm down and then slowly walk away as if not having a care in the world; one of them even shrugged.

"So you're accepting her *gift*, huh?" Ana questioned as they started to walk towards the street.

Robert looked down at her questioningly. "No reason not to. He smells like she properly scared him before he died, maybe not as much as I would have liked, but it will do."

"Even if she seasoned him to your liking," she said darkly, "I don't like you taking anything from her."

"Why?"

She cursed him under her breath, and continued on. "You *know* why! She was all over you, and she's clearly crazy. She's probably going to kill me, but who cares, right?"

"She's not going to kill you."

"How do you know that?"

"I can see it in her mind. She was only intending to before I told her she couldn't."

"Oh, how reassuring," Ana said sarcastically. They passed a group of college-age kids, ones who had no notice of the couple walking by them with the dead body, which was leaving a trail of blood behind them. "She's like Asmod, isn't she? A newer entity?"

"Yes."

"Then she's going to try to kill you, so she can rise to power - "

"She has no intention of doing that."

"Maybe not now, but what happens when that changes?"

Robert sighed, clearly growing annoyed by Ana's questions. "You have to trust that there's nothing to worry about."

"I can't read her mind like you can. So no, I'm not going to trust that she's harmless. If she doesn't want to kill you, what does she want?"

Robert was silent for a few moments before speaking, as if he were mulling his answer over. It was a newer behavior that the Eater of Worlds had adopted, likely from constantly arguing with his

companion. "To please me."

If Ana's blood had been bubbling in anger earlier in the night, it was at a red-hot, rolling boil now. As the jealousy started to replace every other emotion she had been feeling, Robert started to snicker at her. "Shut up," she seethed, knowing that he was laughing at her blatant envy.

"You're so *cute*!" Robert teased, perfect white teeth gleaming at her as he flashed her a broad smile.

"This isn't funny! Fuck!" They were nearing the tree line, and Ana started to dread another traipse through the woods to bring the carcass down to the sewers. "Penny, she's the one that started the fire, isn't she?"

"Yes."

"And left the message on the door?"

"Yes."

"She's fucking *evil*! She killed all those kids - "

"A fraction of the amount of how many I've killed over the years," Robert cut her off, and Ana sensed that they had reached his breaking point. "And yet here you are, following me home."

"Fuck you."

"Yes, I'm sure that will be happening tonight, as soon as you get off your high horse."

Ana stopped in her tracks, letting the entity get quite a bit further ahead of her in the dark woods while she contemplated her next words. "I want her dead!" she yelled after him. Robert stopped suddenly, turning around on his heels, dropping his meal as he took long, slow strides towards her. She had expected him to become enraged, and she had been right; his blue eyes were narrowed at her dangerously, his eyebrows furrowed and wrinkling his otherwise flawless skin. Normally, Ana was able to stand her ground during a fight, but this time, she stumbled backwards a few steps, her back

hitting a tree. As he reached her, he slammed a hand against the bark on either side of her face, daring her to try and get away from him.

"You keep thinking you can just order me around, little girl," he said, his voice near a whisper, a rare volume that indicated to Ana that he was not in the mood for games. "I've saved your hide, agreed to start feeding the way that *you* want me to, all for what? So you can keeping *hating* what I am?"

"I don't *hate* what you are - " she started quietly, and he smashed a fist into the tree, making her gasp as she heard the thick trunk crunch under his strength.

"You do! There's still a part of you that's disgusted by me. Don't try to deny it," he continued dangerously.

"I'm sorry that your ego is *so* threatened that you have to keep this cosmic bitch around to stroke it for you. You want someone to worship the ground you walk on? Fine. I'm not it," she said, her breath catching in her throat as she watched Robert's blue eyes change to gold in a flash. He stared at her for what felt like minutes, and finally, his face cracked into a sickening, cruel smile.

"You want her dead? Then do it yourself," he said, and turned away suddenly, heading back towards the body to retrieve it.

Ana didn't know what to do at first. She wondered if she could possibly find her way out of the woods by herself in the darkness, but then her next challenge would be trying to find a safe place to go. Then the image of Lamia's snarling, sharp teeth flashed in her mind. As much as he had reassured her that the female entity wouldn't go after her based on his command, she didn't trust that she was out of harm's way. So she found herself jogging after him again.

They didn't speak as they made their way through the sewers and up to the house. He barely acknowledged her when she made her way upstairs, and she began to wonder if he was going to spend the night in the sewers instead of with her, something he hadn't done since she had found out that her 'family' had lost all memory of her. The possibility made her feel very much alone and disheartened.

It seemed like hours as she sat on the bed, wringing her hands and thinking about the night's events. Part of her mind continued to speculate about the arrival of a threatening new entity, but the majority of her concerns were stemming from the most recent altercation with Robert. They had had their fair share of fights, no doubt, but since they had woken up, he was obsessed with having her complete acceptance, something she could only genuinely give him when she was ready, as she couldn't hide anything from the shape shifter.

The fact that she had completely sobered up finally hit her when she began to feel extremely parched, and the excuse that she needed a glass of water made her leave the bedroom so she could search for the cosmic entity. She slowly made her way down the stairs, spotting him in the kitchen. He had reverted back to his clown form and was standing in front of one of the cabinets, his back facing her. Without saying a word, she pulled a glass from the cupboard and turned the water on to fill it.

She felt strong arms wrap around her waist as she turned off the faucet, pulling her close to Pennywise's tall, lean form. She closed her eyes and relished in the feel of him against her. He bent his neck down to nuzzle his face into her shoulder and neck, a content sigh blowing warm breath onto her skin. The couple never really verbalized apologies to one another after clashing, rarely saying 'I'm sorry', or 'Please forgive me'. Rather, they tended to express their atonement physically, and this time was no different. The clown stepped around her so they were facing each other, bending down so he could grab her face with gloved hands and kiss her. His tender movements quickly transformed to vigorous and needy, his long tongue encircling hers and exploring her mouth, sending electricity from her lips all the way down to her groin. Ana moaned into his mouth when his hands moved from her face down to her chest, wasting no time in going under her shirt to knead the rounded flesh there greedily. Reaching down to rub the bulging spot on the clown's silver pants, Ana could feel the wetness start to accumulate between her legs, eager to indulge the aching that was starting to flourish there. She had barely started to trace the outline of Pennywise's engorged length through the costume when he suddenly removed his hands from her under her bra and shirt, using them to grasp Ana

under her thighs and lift her up onto the countertop. She giggled when she heard forgotten utensils and cookware crash to the floor in their flurry of desire, and he hooked his fingers under the waistband of her pants, pulling them down in one fluid motion as she lifted her hips for him. Ana felt heat rise up in her chest and neck in anticipation as his tall frame started to kneel on the floor before her.

"I'm still mad at you, you know," she teased, and he cocked an eyebrow at her as he curtly pushed her legs apart wider, nestling himself in between them. She moaned in pure bliss as he pushed two gloved digits inside of her, his eyes still locked on her as he started to pump them rhythmically.

"No you're not," he hissed back at her. "And even if you were, you'd forgive me after this."

"Always so confident - " she started to banter back at him, but she was silenced as he lowered his head down to meet his hand, his tongue how pressing onto her clit rigidly, the pressure making her buck her hips in an attempt to demand more contact.

"My insolent, greedy girl," he purred at her, then pressed his tongue against her again, making her cry out. As he started to lap at her core, she felt her release start to build inside her rapidly, his familiarity with her body and substantial amount of time spent exploring it make him quite skilled in making her cum. She was trembling in ecstasy in no time, and he continued his onslaught on her even before she had finished coming down from her first orgasm.

She was a shaking, heaving mess after finished for the second time, and she was barely aware of what was going on when he stood up, grasping her hips roughly to flip her over so she was bent over the countertop now, and he yanked her hips up towards his so he could enter her swiftly. She groaned at the sensation of his cock suddenly filling her up, and as he started to thrust, she felt an additional appendage started to caress the skin on her back as it traveled towards her head. The thick tentacle began to slowly wrap itself around her neck, and she opened her mouth eagerly to allow it entrance into her mouth.

Pennywise was completely lost in the moment then, his golden eyes

rolled back into his head as he slammed over and over into his lover. He finished with a guttural growl, taking his sweet time removing the glistening appendage from Ana's mouth and slowly uncoiling it from around her neck. She gasped for an uninhibited breath as soon as the fleshy choker was gone, and she turned over just in time to see it slither and disappear somewhere into the entity's back. Pennywise reached a white hand towards her face, slowly wiping the saliva that had accumulated on her bottom lip and chin in their endeavors, mirroring when she had done the same thing to him at the bar only hours earlier.

The immediate reminder of their activities at the Blueberry Moose resulted in the worries that had plagued her there to came rushing back. Pennywise must have sensed it as they went up the stairs towards their empty bed, because he let out a huff of exasperation into the silence between them.

"Sweet girl," he said, climbing onto the bed and gesturing for her to join him, "if you can't relax after all that, there's no hope for you."

Ana gave him a weak attempt at a half smile. "I guess not." She laid down next to him, snuggling her face into his neck as he wrapped his arms around her again, pulling her close. Had they been any other couple on planet Earth, this may have been the appropriate time to express their affection for each other; but a typical pair, they were not. In intimate times like these, Ana sometimes felt the impulse to utter that dreaded four-letter word, but she always shoved it back down into her subconscious as best as she could, praying that Pennywise wouldn't catch it and start to mock her for it. Thus far, he had not mentioned it if he did see it in her thoughts, and she wasn't quite sure he would even understand it if he did.

"Would it make you feel better if we go kill the child molester tomorrow?" he asked her, saying it like he had just offered to take her out for a lavish date night to spoil her.

"Yes," she replied, smiling at the crudeness of his offer. "I would like that very much."

7. Chapter 7

"I just don't get why you don't see how dangerous she is," Ana was saying as she cracked an egg into the frying pan in front of her. Her hair was piled on the top of her head in a loose bun, and she had yet to get dressed for the day, just having gotten up minutes earlier. Pennywise had attempted to seduce her the moment she had woken up, but had halted his advances as soon as he perceived her worries coming back to her from the night before.

As she worked on making her breakfast, Pennywise was stretching, his long arms reaching towards and nearly touching the ceiling. His blazing orange hair was disheveled and and falling in wisps around his large face, a look that Ana always found endearing. Even with an argument already underway for the morning, the clown still looked tired and a bit dazed, as if he still needed time to fully wake up.

"Sweet girl," he croaked, shaking his head slightly as if to shake the cobwebs loose in his brain, and the bells on his costume jingled merrily as he moved, "I thought we were done with this topic last night."

"Just because we had sex doesn't mean we came to a conclusion!" she said, pulling some orange juice from the fridge, plopping it a little too roughly onto the counter, some of its contents starting to ooze out of the top.

"Could've fooled Pennywise," the clown mumbled back at her, and she rolled her eyes as she pulled the egg from the pan and put it onto a plate.

"What's it going to take? Her killing me for you to realize it?"

"She doesn't intend to kill you," he huffed, repeating the same thing from the night before.

"Pennywise," Ana continued, angrily cutting into her breakfast with a fork as she stood and argued with the ancient being, "What if she's fooling you somehow? You said the ev - " she started to say 'evil entities', but stopped herself short, as every time she referred to them

or Pennywise as evil, it seemed to highly offend him. "The new entities, can't they all have different abilities? What if hers is being able to deceive you?"

Even with catching herself before spewing the entire insulting word, Pennywise had seen it in her mind, and was now glaring at her. "You think she could deceive *me?"* he growled at her, his golden eyes flashing in anger. "I am the Eater of Worlds, the Superior Being! Billions of years old, and have wisdom that your insignificant, ignorant mind can't even begin to - "

"Alright, alright, *Dominus,"* Ana snapped back at him, her anger beginning to match his as she cut him off before he could continue to throw insults at her, "I didn't mean to poke the narcissistic bear. Cool it!" As she studied the enraged clown that now had drool hanging from his red lips because he had been spitting, she wondered how much of his ill temper and fickle outbursts were starting to rub off on her. "Why did she call you that, anyway?"

Pennywise shrugged, still looking resentfully at her as he responded. "As a form of respect."

Ana couldn't actually read the entity's mind, which was wholly unfair because he did it to her all the time, but she was positive she knew what was going through his thoughts right then nonetheless. Her gut told her to keep her mouth shut, bury it down, but the words came bubbling up just like they always did, ensuring that she was always balancing on the edge of pissing off the demon clown. "Is that what you want from me? Should I start calling you 'Master'? Or maybe 'Sir Pennywise, Lord of the Dancing Clowns'?"

She was in fighting mode, expecting him to react a certain why, perhaps threaten her or slam her into the fridge like he'd done so many times in the past. But unpredictable as always, his boisterous laughter that filled the house caught her completely off guard.

"That wasn't supposed to be funny," she grumbled, throwing her plate in the sink and rinsing it as he clutched his stomach, now doubling over as he cackled.

"Even so, you are entertaining to Pennywise, little Ana," he replied,

giggling between his words, and he reached out to grasp her arms. She pulled away from him bitterly, then walked past him and into the dining room, putting distance and furniture between them.

"I'm serious, Penny. Why do you want to keep her around?" she asked, sitting down at the table, waiting for his chortling to subside. When he had regained his composure somewhat, he came to join her in the other room, although he didn't sit.

"I don't want to keep Lamia around," he said, and Ana folded her arms across her chest, even the mention of the blonde entity on his lips making the hatred for her increase tenfold. "I just don't feel the need to kill her."

"But - "

"She's evil! She's going to kill you!" he cut her off, his tone unkind and shrill. "How many times does Pennywise have to repeat himself?"

Ana took a few seconds to take a deep inhale, trying to keep her tone calm to keep the conversation going. "But *why* don't you want to kill her?" Explanations were racing through her mind, and she kept her eyes focused on the clown as she waited for a plausible answer. Whether he was holding back, not wanting to tell her the truth, or didn't really understand his own reasoning, she couldn't be sure. Finally, he spoke, his words forming slowly as they left his mouth.

"You think that it is my nature to kill my own kind, just because they exist."

Ana looked at him, bewilderment etched on her features as she pondered her response. "You killed Asmod," she pointed out, keeping all emotion out of her tone.

"He wanted to kill us," Pennywise replied, the answer coming out quickly now.

"So if he hadn't, you would have let him live? Just let him go about his life?"

The clown shrugged his broad shoulders, pom poms wiggling with his movements. Ana was perplexed, the concept that this monster, this

murderer of children and consumer of innocents would be fine with letting competition, and potential usurpers go about their business was completely foreign to her. But the more she tried to grasp it, she began to realize that maybe she *was* ignorant about the matter, as he had called her earlier. The fearsome tiger that feasts upon the flesh of those smaller creatures it considers prey does not necessarily seek out to destroy other tigers, especially ones that don't pose a threat.

She was finally beginning to feel like she was understanding his viewpoint, maybe even starting to empathize with him. But curiosity was getting the better of her, and she started to ask something she knew she probably shouldn't before she could stop herself. "Are you lonely?"

"What?" he snipped, but he didn't appear to be angry at her inquiry.

"When I was in the deadlights the first time," she started, surprised that she was still able to maintain the calm in her voice as she continued, "there was a point in your memories, especially when you were watching that couple hold each other. You felt isolated, withdrawn. I knew you were lonely. Is that maybe why you won't kill her? Because knowing she's around makes you feel like...there's someone else like you?"

He was silent, and she knew then that he was having a difficult time even grasping the idea of this emotion. Even when she had experienced this memory in the deadlights, she was aware that he didn't know what he was experiencing even as it was happening to him.

"I feel like that sometimes," she said quietly into the silence. "When I think about the fact that I'm not really a human, and I don't have anyone here that I'm close to - "

"You have Pennywise!" he interjected, and she smiled warmly at him, thankful that he jumped to defend their intimacy without a second thought.

"You're right, I do," she said, and she stood up, walking over to him and wrapping her arms around his lean waist. "And I'm very happy about that, Penny, I am. But sometimes I wonder about my home,

and the family and friends that I left behind there when I was taken. What they're like, if they still worry about me."

"You want me to open the portal," he said quietly, and she looked up at him in surprise. "You asked about it before we went to sleep."

She was speechless at first, as she hadn't really thought about it since they had been woken up prematurely. "Maybe...no, I don't know. Are you sure you even can?" she asked, at the risk of wounding his pride and throwing him into a rage again.

"Pennywise can do it. He just doesn't know exactly how it's done yet." He was running a gloved hand through her long hair, the other rubbing small circles on her back, and she sighed contently at the contact. She was thinking about telling him that she had no intentions of leaving him even if the portal was opened somehow, but decided against it; after all, the entity needed little reassurance since he could see her deliberations even as they were forming. And part of her assumed that his arrogance wouldn't allow him to recognize the prospect that she could ever want to leave.

The remainder of their interactions were peaceful for the rest of the morning. The clown had attempted for the second time since waking up to captivate Ana with his mesmerizing seduction techniques (which today included appearing in the shower with no warning and licking her neck while she had her eyes closed, which made her almost trip and kill herself), but somehow she managed to resist, reminding him that they had to go after the man that had been molesting his niece. Pennywise had protested briefly, as he was still marginally satisfied from the night before after having eaten the rapist Lamia had murdered, but Ana insisted they she wanted to do it now, so he didn't have a chance to harm his niece again.

"You went from hating the idea of coming with me to hunt, to demanding that we go *right now*," Pennywise mused, a low, gravelly giggle rising from his throat. They had just left the house and were on the sidewalk; this time, he was still in clown mode and was letting the residents of Derry notice him. It wasn't something he did very often anymore, as in the modern world people didn't take to fiendish-looking circus folk on the streets very well, at least not nearly as well as they did in the previous century. He wanted to do it only after Ana

had the passing thought and had found it amusing.

"What can I say," she said as she walked along, throwing an apologetic smile at a couple and their two preteen children across the street that were eyeing Pennywise warily. "This guy totally deserves what's coming."

"So you're just using me as your lackey," he replied. "Pennywise is just here to do your bidding!"

She threw an aggravated look at him as they walked. "Please, can we not do this now?"

"Do what?" he asked haughtily, and suddenly he was holding a group of red balloons in one hand.

"Fight. Like all the time."

The clown suddenly grabbed her hand in his free one, and she had to bite her lip from laughing uncomfortably as she pictured what they must have looked like right now, walking together down the street. "You wouldn't want it any other way," he retaliated playfully. "Hello there, Addalyn. Want a balloon?" he said to a girl that looked to be about ten years old, who had been running around her front yard with a small dog. She stopped short, her big brown eyes watching Pennywise cautiously as he bent down to offer her one. She hesitantly plucked one from his hand, and he let out a guttural laugh. The dog started to bark, and the girl started to shush it and usher it back towards the house.

"God, you're creepy," Ana grumbled. "So how do you know where this guy is?"

"I just know."

"Do you know what he's doing right now?"

"Watching pornography and touching himself."

Ana snorted. "As long as he's not molesting anyone, I guess. If only I wasn't slowing you down, you could scare the shit out of him mid-jerk."

"Gotta escort my lady," he replied, his disposition remaining jovial as they walked. Ana couldn't help but smile, the crisp air and blue sky making it difficult to feel troubled, especially with Pennywise's ivory hand squeezing hers every now and then. But her good mood was quickly soured when she noticed the clown's own sudden change in attention, his head snapping to the side as if he had caught a scent in the breeze. It was an unwelcome but familiar behavior that Ana only remembered seeing when he sensed Asmod nearby, and she knew right away that their party of two as about to be crashed.

Lamia was standing in front of them on the sidewalk now, her long blonde locks cascading freely down her shoulders and back, the usual black clothing covering her pale skin. The expression on her face was unreadable as her eyes clearly landed on the couple's hands clasped together, and Ana maintained the smug look on her own features when the female entity's eyes met her own.

"Good morning," Lamia said, an undeniably fake smile forming as she spoke. "Already out an about on a morning stroll?"

"Yes, and we'd prefer not to be interrupted," Ana snapped without pause.

"Wow, someone's not a morning person," Lamia replied, and her eyes went from Ana and over to Pennywise. "Sure you don't want some more...*agreeable* company?"

"C'mon," Ana grumbled, starting to walk again and pull gently on his hand, but the clown stayed planted to his spot, making Ana turn around to glare at him.

"This is it," he said to her, the balloons suddenly gone from sight.

"What?"

"This is where he lives," he replied, looking up at the house they were all standing in front of. Ana grew more aggravated, and turned her attention back to the blonde girl.

"Are you following us?" she hissed, and Lamia threw her hands up in front of her in protest.

"What makes you think that?" she asked. "I just happened to run into you two, is all." Her black, make-up covered lips broke into a devilish grin then. "On the hunt again already, are you, Dominus? You must have a voracious appetite." Pennywise was wearing a cocky half-smile on his face now as he looked at the girl.

"No, your little present last night just tasted like shit," Ana seethed. "Now will you get the fuck out of here?"

"Oh, I'll leave," Lamia said, taking a few lackadaisical steps towards them, starting to circle the couple as she spoke. "But only if Pennywise wants me to." Ana watched in horror as the girl reached up and placed a single finger on the clown's shoulder, letting it trail lazily down his arm as she came to stand in front of him. "What do you think? Can I stay?"

Pennywise's golden eyes were locked on her as he slowly nodded, and Ana threw down his hand in anger. The animosity in her only grew as she realized that he didn't even appear to notice.

"You can help with this hunt, but then you will leave," he said gruffly. Ana opened her mouth to protest his answer, but he reached forward abruptly, placing a gloved finger on her lips to silence her. "Sweet girl, I don't want to hear another word."

It was like the rug had been pulled out front under Ana as the next few hours unfolded. She followed the pair of cosmic entities into the house, watched them silently communicate with one another as they stalked their target, feeling very much like a spectator to the game that she and Pennywise were supposed to play together. A small part of her felt appeased as the child molester screamed in terror as a slimy, snarling heap of pulsating sludge crawled out from under the bed that he had recently been pleasuring himself on, chasing him out of the room and throughout the house; it pursued him for what seemed like an eternity, the terror and adrenaline flavoring Pennywise's meal to his liking. Ana and Lamia even stood side by side in the living room to watch the ancient entity advance on the shaking, deplorable excuse for a man. But what really shook her foundation was when Lamia, who had been watching Pennywise in obvious adoration up until that point, suddenly sprang forward to pounce on her 'master's' prey and then impale his torso with long,

sharp claws. As he bled out and his intestines started to spill out onto to the floor, Lamia quietly told him how insignificant he was, why he had been chosen to die this way, even pointed at Ana and told him that it had been her judgment that had brought them to his home. When she got over the shock of the dying man locking eyes with her, terror etched on every inch of him, she looked over to Pennywise, who had reverted back to his clown form. He was staring at Lamia as she still had the corpse in her grasp, a look of reverence emanating from him, something that had previously only been reserved for Ana.

8. Chapter 8

"I beg of you, Most Powerful One," Lamia pleaded as they stood outside the house after the child molester was dead. She took a step towards Pennywise, even daring to reach out and place her hands on his chest. Ana felt the rage in her start to surge, and it took every ounce of self control not to fling herself at the harpy and try to bash her blonde head into the concrete. "Let me carry your meal back for you."

Pennywise let out a low growl, taking a step back to break the contact between them, his hands gripping the body that was slung over his shoulders and dripping blood all over his costume. "I already told you to leave once the hunt was over." Something in the much older entity's mood seemed to have shifted once their target had died, and Ana felt a small glimmer of optimism as he locked eyes with her, giving her a small nod. He started to walk down the sidewalk, and Ana quickly followed suit.

"It's the least I can do," Lamia continued, the raucous desperation in her voice replacing the confident, seductive tone she sometimes used when addressing him. "I only want to please you. Since this puny little pixie can't do it for you, I insist - "

Pennywise turned on his heel without warning, now facing the girl that was following them and stopping her in her tracks. He looked infuriated as he glowered down at her, and his hands started to sprout long, black claws as he spoke. "For someone who wants to please Pennywise, you sure are horrible at obeying what he says!"

Ana barked out a laugh as Lamia looked up at him with tear-filled eyes, looking as though the clown had reached out and slapped her, although Ana really wished that had been the case. "But, Dominus..." she started, clearly not sensing when the argument had been lost.

"Go! Before I spill your guts just like you did to this guy!" he barked, spit flying at her as he shouted, and she finally turned to walk away. Pennywise and Ana started to make their way towards the woods, and when Ana turned her head to make sure the blonde was still heading in the opposite direction, she noticed she had vanished from

view.

"You know," Ana started calmly as she walked beside the incredibly tall clown, "I wouldn't be opposed to you spilling her guts."

"I've had enough of you naive little girls," he replied gruffly. "Save Pennywise the trouble and gut *each other*."

"Woah," Ana said, quickly growing impatient at his foul mood and sinister statement. "Rude! You want her to kill me?" Pennywise huffed, not answering as he continued to trudge along. "You know what, 'Most Powerful One'? I've had enough of the mind fuck for one day. I'll see you at home when I can look at you without vomiting." She suddenly crossed the street, leaving him to head towards the sewers by himself.

"Oh, has my sweet girl suddenly sprouted some testicles?" he called back at her angrily, but she kept going. She knew she was risking Lamia finding her alone, but reminded herself that her lover had insisted that she wouldn't kill her; Ana was so angry at this point that a small, warped piece of her hoped she got killed just to spite the alien and prove him wrong. She turned to look at him, intending to yell something back, but he had disappeared into thin air, leaving her to navigate her way back to Neibolt house alone. As she stalked down the sidewalk, not caring how crazed she appeared as she passed by people, she reflected on how much time she and the sewer clown spent angry at one another, and how turbulent her emotions seemed to be because of it.

In her resentment, Ana decided to make a few pit stops before going back home. She got a cup of coffee to go from the cafe, then spent a few minutes in the used clothing store, the retail therapy resulting in buying a few new outfits for herself. Still wanting to stay out and about in her short-lived independence, she decided to go to Cassandra and Derek's house. None of the family of four seemed to be home, and as she stood there waiting for something to happen, part of her wondered if Pennywise would come and get her. He didn't.

She didn't run into Lamia on her way home. When she got there, the house seemed empty, and only when she had put in a movie and settled herself on the couch did she sense Pennywise moving closer to

her. He entered the room, and she didn't give him the chance to start another argument. She stood immediately, crossing over to him and reaching up to wrap her arms around his neck, her hands yanking his red and white face down to hers so she could crash her lips into his. Neither of them had their recent frustrations towards one another at the forefront of their minds as they kissed and pawed at each other like they had been separated for weeks; as Ana rode the clown roughly, the pair having ended up on the floor near the couch, she only held devotion and esteem for the being underneath her. It was only when they had finished their carnal antics that Ana started to think clearly again.

"Penny," she said quietly as she laid on top of him, resting her chin on her hand as she studied the clown's golden eyes, "We need to talk."

"Do we?" he asked, raising a narrow eyebrow at her. "Or do we need to start round two?" He lifted his head to nibble at her ear hungrily, and she had to will herself to press on with her mission.

"No, not now," she said, sighing as she pulled her head away just enough so he couldn't capture her flesh in his teeth again. "We need to talk about Lamia." Pennywise groaned loudly, and she was already annoyed at the entity's attitude. "Penny, this is important to me!"

"I do a lot of things that are *important* to you," he hissed at her, "and it's never enough."

"Well, that's what relationships are," Ana retorted haughtily. "It's doing things for one another, and compromising, and talking things out."

Pennywise was staring at her, his blank expression telling her that he didn't understand anything she had just said. She figured just as much, that the simplicity in which he viewed his world stunted his understanding of something this emotionally intricate. She reminded herself that it wasn't his fault that he couldn't grasp these concepts, that it was who he was, and she kept going.

"What do I mean to you?" she asked, and she was given another blank stare initially. As he thought about her question, he must have started to read her thoughts, and she knew the exact moment he started to

grow angry once again.

"Sweet girl thinks I'm simple, eh? That I'm not *capable* of understanding something as complicated as *feelings!*"

"Oh, my god," she groaned. "Can you just let something go, for once? Just focus on what I'm asking you?"

"You think me some poor, helpless little creature that is so sweet and innocent that he can't possibly grasp your complex, inhibiting fairy emotions - "

"Pennywise!" she yelled, pushing herself up and standing, not wanting to touch him as he sneered in condescension at her. "I can't help some of the thoughts that go through my head, whether you think they're stupid or not! I'm not going to apologize for having them!" She stormed out of the room, fully intending to leave the house again to get away from him, and he was up in a flash, grasping her forearm in his hand roughly to pull her to him.

"You're not going *anywhere*," he growled at her, his crooked teeth gleaming at her as he curled his red lip in a sneer.

"That's right," she argued, trying to pull her limb from his grip, to no avail. "Remind me that I'm your fucking prisoner. That'll help things!"

Finally, what she said appeared to hit home with the shapeshifter. He blinked at her a few times in surprise, the anger on his features softening. "You *want* to be here with me. I can see it - "

"That's right!" she spat, and she was able to rip her arm away from him. "I want to be here. Because I care about you, and being around you makes me feel happy, as ludicrous at the sounds, as much as we fucking fight!" He was silent then, and Ana was grateful for the opportunity to keep going. "And I am trying, Goddamnit, I am trying *so hard* to give you the acceptance and companionship that you want. Because *it's important to you*! I know I'm not perfect at it, and it pisses you off when you can see what I'm thinking, because sometimes my thoughts don't match up with what you want from me. What else am I supposed to do?" He still didn't speak, and he looked contemplative now as he studied her. "What do you want from me, huh?" she

seethed, and she shoved him roughly, a wasted effort, as the clown didn't budge.

"Nothing else," he said finally, his voice low and even as he stood there with his arms motionless at his sides. "Pennywise wants nothing else from you."

"Then *why*," she started, her nostrils flaring in anger as she hissed at him, "*Why* do you want her around?"

He furrowed his eyebrows in confusion then, but appeared to remain calm, even as the fire continued to rage through her. "Sweet girl, you don't hunt. You don't eat fear, or feast on human flesh."

"Yeah," she said, taking a deep breath as she stared at him, his answer throwing her off course. "I don't."

"Pennywise doesn't expect you to."

"Well, I hope not, because it's not going to happen."

"What Pennywise doesn't understand," he continued, taking a step forward, this time gently taking her hand in his, "Is why you feel competition with her, then. You're not even the same species."

She took a deep breath, her anger finally starting to lessen as he spoke. "Because she worships you, and she touches you, and the way you look at her, it makes me feel so jealous."

"Why?"

"Because it makes me feel like you might want her, instead of me," she admitted finally. "That you're going to cast me aside, because she's like you. I can't hunt, or eat humans with you."

He giggled then. "Well, you can *hunt.* But I won't cast you aside."

"Why? What do I mean to you?" she asked her voice nearly a whisper now as she repeated the question. He didn't speak again, and she willed him, pleaded with him to reach into her mind further, to understand what she was asking of him, what she needed to hear. Finally, he spoke slowly, seeming to choose his words carefully as he

answered her.

"Sweet girl should be with Pennywise always. She makes Pennywise feel satisfied. Pennywise would be very sad if something happened to her and she went away."

She smiled at him. His answer was not worded how she expected, not how expressions of adoration were spoken in the movies or books that she enjoyed. But she knew it was given to her with the best of his ability right then. "Okay. That makes me happy," she said, and she balanced on her tippy toes to give him a quick kiss. "But you have to understand. When Lamia touches you, or flirts with you, it's going to make me upset again."

"I just told you - "

"It doesn't matter, Penny," Ana said sternly. "Wouldn't you be jealous if Mike came back to town and started touching me, or telling me how special he thought I was?" The anger that flashed on the clown's features gave Ana her answer. "That's how I feel when she does that stuff to you."

"Oh."

The air between them was harmonious, and Ana used the calm between them to bring up another subject that haunted her. "Why did you get so angry with her today?"

"You don't want to know," he answered swiftly, peaking her curiosity even more.

"Yes, I do."

He sighed then, a very human behavior that made Ana wonder if they were rubbing off on each other mutually, not just him influencing her to act like a crazed person. "She wants you gone, just as much as you want her gone."

"I'm not surprised," Ana quipped. "Does she want to kill me - "

"No."

"I don't think you're answering me truthfully," Ana countered. "You said she *won't* because you told her not to. But does she *want* to?"

Pennywise snorted, choosing to walk out of the room rather than answer her. "Why you women can't just exist with one another, I don't know." Ana followed him closely, not done with this conversation, even though the entity appeared to be.

"So you want us to be friends? Is that it?" Ana asked. "I don't think that's a possibility. She wants you to herself - "

"As do you."

"Well, she's not even a woman, she's not human - "

"Neither are you."

Ana was stunned at his reasoning slightly, and she cocked a half smile at him. "True. But I was here first. And you're *mine."*

At her possessive statement, he smiled back at her, scooping her up in his long arms to carry her to the bedroom. "Time for round two!" he cackled.

Later that night, when the pair were seated back on the couch watching *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, Pennywise offered to look into opening the portal to her home dimension, something that took Ana completely by surprise.

"But, how do you find out how it's done?" she asked in bewilderment.

"I'll leave my physical body down in the cavern for safety," he answered her matter-of-factually. "Then I'll go into the Macroverse."

"So like, the deadlights will go there?"

"Silly Ana," he said, giggling. "I *am* the deadlights."

Ana nodded slowly. "How long will you be gone, then?"

"Not very. Time is irrelevant there."

"You'll be leaving me alone," Ana pointed out.

"Will you miss me?" he mocked, and she playfully punched him in the arm. Ana's flirtatious mood was short-lived, as the entity then announced that he would go there now. Ana tried to quell her fears, as she was grateful that he was willing to do it in the first place. But she couldn't shake the feeling that Lamia was always keeping tabs on them, waiting for the right time to pounce.

"Be safe, okay?" she said worriedly, feeling oddly protective of the Eater of Worlds as they walked down the stairs to the basement together. He laughed at her concerns, giggling as he answered her.

"Sweet girl, I am untouchable in the Macroverse." There were no reciprocated sentiments of worrying for her safety, as he was as cocky as ever that she would be just fine while alone in the house. Ana could sense him as he descended to the sewers, and the moment he had left the atmosphere, she was at the mercy of the anxiety that plagued her, the connection between them telling her that he was long gone.

Pennywise was gone for a grand total of twenty minutes before Ana heard the pounding on the front door. At first, she stayed planted in the basement, willing the unwanted guest to give up and go away. When she heard the loud crunch of the door being punched through and the bang as it was forced open, she gathered every bit of bravery she could muster and went up the stairs to meet the intruder. As she armed herself with a butcher's knife as she went through the kitchen, she knew without seeing who had come calling at this hour; her guess was confirmed correct when she saw Lamia standing in the entryway, a sickening smile adorning her pale features.

9. Chapter 9

"Get out." It was the first thing that came to Ana's mind as she stood to face the demonic intruder, a command that she knew as she was saying it was not going to be listened to. She felt strangely composed as she looked the blonde up and down with an air of distaste, the smooth handle of the knife she was brandishing being grasped by a steady hand.

Lamia laughed at her. "What's with the blade? Do you think it would actually help you?"

"Maybe, maybe not," Ana replied coolly. "Would you even bleed if I jabbed this thing in your throat?"

Lamia clicked her tongue at the brunette, taking a few tentative steps towards her. Ana stayed planted in her spot, determined not to appear intimidated to the trespasser. "You speak of such *violence*, little girl. There's no need."

"Bullshit. You murdered the damn door," Ana said, gesturing with her empty hand towards the demolished piece of wood that once closed off the rest of the world from her haven.

Lamia was suddenly right in front of her, having taking a few quick steps so she was inches away, her ivory face so close to hers that Ana could nearly count the individual mascara-coated lashes. She kept knife at her side, but pointed towards Lamia's abdomen, a silent warning not to move any closer or risk being impaled. "If I was going to kill you, little girl, you would have been dead a long time ago. There would be nothing you could do to stop me."

Ana didn't reply, knowing that the entity was right, that the only reason she was still alive was because Lamia was obeying Pennywise. Even knowing that truth, Ana felt a priggish gratification thinking about it, aware that the possession of that advantage was contributing to Lamia's distress. "You're foolish, standing there looking so smug," Lamia snarled suddenly, her own placid demeanor suddenly dissolving in a nasty fit of envy. "It's only going to be a matter of time before the Great One realizes what a hindrance you

really are!"

"Oh, is that so? When do you think he's going to realize it, the next time we're fucking? Or maybe the next time he takes me with him for his next long sleep?" She knew she was taking petty jabs, but her impulse to rub it all in was far too staggering to allow her to heed her own brain's warnings to stop. Lamia looked like her sanity was absolutely undone at Ana's words, her eyes wide as she bared her sharp teeth at her. They stared at each other for a few seconds before Lamia suddenly gripped Ana's throat in a clawed hand, the hold on her so tight that Ana instantly started to struggle for air. Ana tried to stab the entity, but in a flash Lamia had knocked the weapon out of her hand and it clattered to the floor, the only noise in the room now besides Ana gasping for breath.

"You're an impolite, cheeky little thing," Lamia growled. Ana could feel claws puncturing the skin on her neck. "I could use that cooking utensil to carve up your pretty face. Wouldn't that be poetic! I wonder how much he'd like you then." She bent down to reach for the knife, but Ana was able to kick it away from her outstretched hand, the weapon sliding across the floor and under the coffee table.

Lamia went from looking livid to highly amused in a matter of seconds, and she cackled lowly as she locked eyes with Ana. "You are so feisty! No matter. I always have the option of my *natural talents*." The sharp black nail on her pointer finger started to grow, and she placed it right below Ana's eye. Ana grimaced as the entity started to drag the pointed talon down her cheek, the sharp pain telling her that Lamia was indeed starting to carve up her face as she said she would. Ana landed a hard kick to her shin, then punched the heavily made up face as hard as she could; it wasn't enough to actually hurt the entity, but it seemed to surprise her, and she let go of Ana's throat. Ana took a few steps back from her, wheezing as she held her bleeding neck in her hand. She looked down at the fist she had used to hit the goth with, her knuckles bleeding from coming into contact with her razor-like teeth.

Lamia placed the nail that had Ana's blood on it in her wine red mouth, sucking it clean while she stared at her. "Mmm. I must admit, you are rather tasty."

Ana coughed a few times before she could respond. "You're insane!"

"Well, now that we got that little scuffle out of the way," Lamia suddenly said then, walking past Ana and into the the kitchen, "We can talk, woman to woman. That's what I came here for, after all."

"Oh, you came to talk, huh?" Ana seethed, hating that the blonde had made her way further into the house, but following her just the same, as she sure as hell didn't feel like letting her wander around unsupervised. "Should I put on some tea? Maybe warm up a few biscuits?"

Lamia was leaning against the counter now, and made a face of disgust. "I don't eat that shit."

"I was being sarcastic, you crazy bitch."

"Damn, that mouth!" Lamia said, scoffing at her. "Do you always talk like that? It's a wonder Pennywise hasn't killed you. He doesn't like defiant subordinates."

Ana internally agreed with her, but was never going to admit it. "And *you* know what he likes and doesn't like, huh?"

"Of course I do. Do you think I'd know how to wake him up from his long rest if I didn't?"

"You're fucking evil and you decided to murder a bunch of kids. You would have done it anyway, you just got lucky."

Lamia laughed at her, Ana's hatred intensifying at the sound. "You think you've got everything figured out, precious fairy. You know nothing."

"Okay," Ana said, wetting a paper towel with cool water and dabbing her skinned knuckles with it. "Enlighten me, since you won't fucking leave."

"First off, you should know that I do know a lot about the Master. More than you probably every will." Ana opened her mouth to protest, but finally listened to the inner voice that screamed at her to shut up. "There are those of us that were born out of the death of the

turtle. You've met one of them, I recall," she said, smirking.

"Yeah, I did," Ana replied dryly, knowing she was referring to Asmod.

"The majority of them want to destroy the Great One so they can take his place. We are all stunted, can't realize our full potential while another is in power."

"Which is why you're here," Ana said, glowering at her.

"No, it's not!" Lamia argued. "While it's true that the others continue to squabble among each other, and some of them have been occupied for a long time trying to kill each other so there's less competition, I'm here for a completely different reason. You see, little girl, we know much about the Powerful One, we have to if we want a chance to ever take his place. But for me, the more I learned, the more I *knew* him, the more I just wanted to be near his greatness. To help him, learn from him, just be with him."

"Great. So you're a stalker."

"There will be a time when he will be grateful for my devotion," Lamia replied, sneering at Ana's snarky words. "I might be the only one here now, but there will be a time, perhaps even while he is awake this cycle, that more will come to challenge his power. And I'll be right at his side to aid him."

"I don't think he needs any help. Did you hear what happened to Asmod and his followers?"

"Asmod failed because he was rash and foolish. Others that take their time and plan things out might be in a better position to challenge him."

"It sounds like you're questioning the 'Most Powerful One's' abilities," Ana said sarcastically. "I'm not sure how much he's going to appreciate that."

"I don't question that he has immense power, a divinity that I can barely fathom. But little pixie, you and I both know that his ego may get him into trouble at some point. That's why it's important for me to be here."

"Pennywise doesn't need your help and he damn sure doesn't want you here as some sort of apprentice. He barely tolerates *my* company sometimes. What's going through your head, that he's going to suddenly want you with him all the time, maybe come live in this house with us?" Ana replied, exasperated at the entity's insistence.

"He only resurrected this house for your pompous, materialistic needs," Lamia snapped. "If he were devoted to *me,* we'd be living in the sewers where he did long before your finicky, selfish little fairy ass interrupted his way of living."

"He doesn't seem to mind," Ana retorted, and she eyed the knife block in her periphery, now imagining trying to stab her once again. "And you finally admitted it, haven't you? That you want me out of the way so you two can be *devoted* to each other. Well, I have some news for you! He doesn't *want* you!"

Lamia chuckled sadistically, taking a few steps towards Ana, then picking up the entire knife block and throwing it into the dining room so it was out of Ana's view, and reach. It hit the table with a sickening thud, even managing to crash into the ceramic fruit bowl that was acting as the centerpiece, the sound of glass shattering echoing in Ana's ears. She was pleased that she managed not to flinch. "His desires might be clouded with you still here. But he'll soon realize what's best for him."

"Are you trying to threaten me? Too bad I already assumed as much - "

"You're arrogant, and very stupid!" Lamia nearly shouted. "Do you think he'll be able to tolerate you for much longer? That he'll want some quivering, holier-than-thou, weak little girl as his mate, when he could have one of his own kind?" Ana's confidence wavered slightly, and Lamia sensed it. Her lips spread into that same putrid grin that had been on her face when she had first crashed through the front door. Her face moved close to Ana's, her volume now at a low whisper. "I know you've seen the way he looks at me, his natural response when I barely touch him. If you think I have no influence on his desires, you're sadly mistaken, little girl." She chuckled slightly. "You should see how he imagines what it would be like to *fuck* me."

Ana felt a tugging in her chest then, at first thinking it was her body manifesting her rage, but she quickly knew that she was sensing him coming back to her. The confidence that had just left her came rushing back. "Here's an idea. Why don't we ask him and we'll see what he wants? I'm not fucking going anywhere."

Lamia sneered at her. "What would make you go willingly? I haven't quite figured it out yet, but I will." She started to head towards the entryway then. "My original plan was to threaten to kill that little make believe family of yours. But he forbid that before I could use it against you. Such a compelling hold you have on him." She neared the front door, the destroyed wood still barely managing to stay swinging on its hinges. "No worries. I'll be seeing you, little fairy."

Ana stared intently after Lamia as she finally left the house, her fists balled so tightly that she was jabbing her palms with her nails. Her envy was nearly palpable as she wondered when Pennywise and Lamia had the opportunity to discuss Ronnie and Heather, and involuntarily she started to imagine what else they may have been up to when she wasn't paying enough attention. Lamia's statement that Pennywise pictured the two of them fornicating started to cloud her brain, but she was able to internally scold herself and pull herself out of it before it overcame her.

"She's just trying to get to you," Ana muttered to herself. She crossed over to the front door, pleased that it still swung shut. But it was crooked as it hung there and she couldn't latch it; she could see the glowing light of street lamps through the hole that the entity had punched through it. She was worrying about having to replace it, when she realized that Pennywise could more than likely just 'fix' the door by merely thinking about it. More occupied with the return of her lover than the door, she headed towards the basement to meet him.

She could feel him getting closer and closer, and by the time he was coming up to the house, Ana had a big smile on her face. As the clown came into view blazing orange hair first, Ana rushed towards the well, throwing her arms around him as soon as he was standing in the basement.

"Miss me, sweet girl?" his gravelly voice purred as he returned her

squeeze. Before she could reply, he started to sniff her, then placed his hands on her arms and pushed her away from him so he could look her over. "You're bleeding."

Ana's hands went to her face, as she had momentarily forgotten about the wounds on her neck, the sliced cheek and bleeding knuckles. "Oh. Your little friend came for a chat." He was circling her now, taking in her disheveled appearance with concern on his face, and was silent as he delved into her recent encounter. "And she broke the door, and my fruit bowl - "

A low growl escaped Pennywise's lips. "I mean, I figure you could fix the door pretty easily - " she started, but he cut her off.

"Who cares about the door?" he spat. "That insolent girl has some balls!"

"Yeah, she has some crazy idea that she's going to get rid of me so you two can be together, and that you need her help - "

"She's been obsessed with those thoughts from the beginning. But I didn't expect her to rush over here as soon as I left the universe."

Ana folded her arms over her chest, debating whether or not she wanted to start another fight only seconds after Pennywise had gotten back. "I told you she's dangerous, that she wants me out of the way," she stated calmly, willing herself to not lose her temper as she wondered how much of this Pennywise already knew, but chose not to disclose with her.

"Don't get your sparkling fairy panties in a bunch. She's not anywhere near the house now," he retorted. Normally, that kind of reply would have pissed her off, but the connection between them was making her so relieved that he was near her again, and was keeping her in good spirits. "But the next the time she does come around, she's going to be wishing she didn't!"

"C'mon," she said, smiling and taking his hand and leading him towards the stairs. "I want to hear about your trip." As he walked behind her, he lifted her wounded hand to his mouth, licking at the drying blood like it was a popsicle. As they settled onto the couch

together, he started to do the same to her face and neck. "You're getting clown slobber all over me!" she giggled.

As they cuddled together, Pennywise started to tell her about his time in the Macoverse. It had been relatively uneventful, as he had been merely searching for information, and had ended up interacting with the new beam guardian.

"So this one took Maturin's spot after he died?" she asked, knowing she didn't fully grasp all these cosmic entities.

"Yes."

"What animal is it?"

"A tortoise."

Ana snorted in laughter. "Are you kidding?"

"No," Pennywise replied, looking confused. Ana was about to try to explain why she found it funny, but decided it was a lost cause.

"Okay. What did you find out?"

"The only known way to open portals besides going to the Macroverse and using the beams, is to use dark forces."

"And I can't go to the Macroverse?"

"No."

"So the only way is how Asmod did it?"

"Yes. The only way that the guardian knew of was to use the blood of many innocents."

Ana remembered what Asmod had told her, that he had bled out as many as twenty children to bring her to Earth from her home dimension. An unpleasant shiver went up her spine. "So it's a lost cause, then."

"If you don't want me to kill a handful of kids, then yes."

"Of course I don't," she said quickly. "Nothing is worth that." She nestled her head into Pennywise's chest, sighing as she breathed in his familiar scent. "Thank you for looking into it." She expected a snide remark, something along the lines of, 'I know how you can thank me' or some other sexual innuendo, but it didn't come.

"You're welcome, my sweet girl," he mumbled quietly. They enjoyed a peaceful evening together, followed by a passionate session in the bedroom. Once again, Ana felt the infamous 'L' word at the forefront of her mind, but she pushed it away just like she always did.

The next morning, the couple was sitting at the table as Ana ate her breakfast, and they were discussing who they were going to hunt that day. They decided on the father that was essentially torturing one of his kids. They still hadn't run out of potential prey that they had found at the bar the other night, although Ana reminded Pennywise a few times that if he came across someone worse that she wanted to know so they could be added to the list.

She came up with a new plan for this hunt. Rather than go to the man's house and have to dodge his family, Ana suggested that they bring him down the sewers. The clown was more than willing to go along with it, as he was just thrilled that Ana was willing to actively participate. So they went to the house together, Ana knocking on the front door to ask for the lucky father-of-the-year. A little girl opened the door, one who looked dirty and disheveled, and her appearance only increased Ana's desire to get rid of the guy.

"Hi there," she said pleasantly. "Is your daddy Jared?"

"Yeah," the girl said meekly, and Ana heard a deep voice yelling at the television in another room.

"Can you have him come to the door? Tell him it's for...free samples of beer." It worked like a charm, and the jaundiced, deranged looking man came stumbling to the front steps, a half a bottle of beer still clutched in his hand.

"Where's my free shit?" he barked, looking Ana up and down.

"If you'll just come to my car," she said, motioning towards a random

vehicle that was parked on the street, "I have a case there I might need you to help me carry." The man followed her to the sidewalk, but he was quickly growing impatient.

"You dumb bitch, why should I have to come all the way out here to get my shit?" A large hand swung forward to slap her face, and she caught his wrist with both of her hands.

"You want to start this game already, huh?" she hissed, and the man dropped his beer bottle so he could try to strike her with his other hand. This time, a hand covered in a white glove stopped the blow from behind, and Jared suddenly found himself being dragged backwards by his arms. He started to bellow and cuss, trying to free himself from the vice-like grip as his bare heels were being dragged on the cement.

"Thanks, Penny," Ana said, smiling up at the clown. He smiled back at her, then let go of the man's arms so he could knock him to the ground with one swift elbow to his face. He bent down to grab his meal's foot, now dragging his entire struggling body on the ground. With the entity's powers of deception, they were able to make their way to the sewers with no one noticing the scraped up, screaming man and the circus clown that was hauling him.

They reached the Barrens, and Pennywise dropped the man's foot as they stood in front the entrance to the sewers. Jared was still screaming, but was now sputtering as he tried to keep his face out of the dirty water. He was struggling to get up when Ana started to speak.

"Okay, Jared," she said, pulling out a large hunting knife that she and her lover had acquired that morning. "We're going to play a little game. You're going to go in there," she said, gesturing towards the sewers. "If you can find your way out, then you can go back home to your family and you can go back to abusing your kids."

"Fuck you, you dumb cunt!" he shrieked at her, finally standing on his feet. He was bleeding from head to toe, and Pennywise was starting to drool as he looked at him.

"That's no way to speak to my lady," Pennywise growled, his

signature grin spreading across his face. The man started to shriek in terror as his attention was drawn to the clown, then took off into the darkness of the sewers.

"I mean, you could just eat him now," Ana said, shrugging at him.

"No, no," Pennywise said, giggling. "This is going to be fun!"

They stayed together for the entire hunt. Pennywise changed shape a few times, taking the forms of a Frankenstein-like monster and a large serpent to keep the prey feeling the maximum level of terror and keep him running, but Ana was just as satisfied with their stalk by calling the man's name every now and then. Finally, the man had found his way into Pennywise's dungeon, the dim light in the cavern allowing Jared to lay eyes on Ana once again.

"I'm gonna fucking kill ya!" he screamed at her, and Ana was suddenly alone as the large man charged at her. He knocked her to the ground, her clothes being soaked with grey water, and she struggled for a bit to wrestle her way on top of him. Lucky for her, the man was greatly fatigued at this point, his blows barely connecting with her much smaller body as he tried to defend himself. Ana plunged the large blade into his chest, hoping it would sever his aorta as she had planned. The man stopped moving almost immediately, and as the blood started to soak her clothing and hands, Ana started to look around for Pennywise. He was standing a few feet away from them, watching them intently with a look of pride on his features.

"Good girl," he purred at her, and she couldn't help but smile at his praise. She didn't watch as the clown devoured his meal, but stayed in the cavern nonetheless, determined to show her support to her partner.

It was only when Pennywise was finished with his meal and the two of them, wet and blood soaked, were heading back to the house that something connected for Ana. The large amount of blood that she had just seen had her thinking about what Pennywise had said about opening the portal with the blood of innocents, and how Lamia had been responsible not only for the fire that killed seventeen children, but was also the one who had made ten children disappear, their

bodies still not accounted for.

10. Chapter 10

"Ana, I don't want to hear another word from that pretty little mouth!"

"I know you don't want to! But you have to see, she's up to something - "

"She isn't! Or I'd see it!"

A newly ignited fight was under way between Ana and Pennywise. They had been back at the house for a few measly minutes before it had erupted, while Ana was stripping off her bloodied garments next to the washing machine. Briefly debating keeping her concerns to herself, she had ultimately settled on bringing it up right away, as the entity was going to see her thoughts anyway. The mutual affection and resulting harmony that radiated between them after Pennywise's most recent meal was short lived, as most of their peaceful moments were.

"Okay, let's say she isn't," Ana seethed through her clenched jaw. She was now down to her undergarments and was ferociously scrubbing at the bodily fluids that had saturated her clothing, the water that was cascading from the laundry sink's faucet splashing everywhere and contributing to the mess that was accumulating. "What did she do with all those kids?"

The clown gave her a knowing glance, pursing his lips together as looked at the girl disapprovingly.

"Well?" Ana questioned, growing aggravated that he wasn't answering her.

"Sweet girl doesn't want to know," he growled at her.

In her anger, she whipped the bloody, dripping scrub brush she had been using at his head, and he dodged it with ease. It bounced off the wall behind him, rolling across the floor and finally coming to rest at Ana's feet. The clown was now laughing, making Ana wish she had something heavier at her dispense to throw at his giant white head.

"What, are you trying to protect my feelings?" she asking, her wet hands clenching into angry fists at her sides. "You've never done me that courtesy before, why start now?"

The laughter stopped, and he flashed his crooked buck teeth at her, a hybrid between a snarl and a grin. "Oh, my little girl is thinking highly of herself, now that she's taken part in killing prey!"

"I didn't just take part," Ana countered. She turned back to her task, opening the washer and throwing the stained clothing into it. "I *killed* him!"

"So that makes you coldhearted and accustomed to it, eh? Stabbing one fat, scuzzy human makes you - "

"Like you? Of course not," she spat, his mockery certainly expected, but magnifying her frustration nonetheless. "I'd never *dream* of trying to compare myself to you! I don't think my tiny human brain is capable of being that egocentric!"

His long legs allowing him to cross the room in a few quick strides, he was on her in a split second, pushing her backwards into the washer and pinning her to it with his body. He bent his head down to hers, his lips nearly brushing her ear as he muttered, "So irritating. Pennywise never knows if he wants to discipline you or ravish you." His mouth caught her earlobe and he started to nibble lightly.

More often than not, this sort of behavior would lead to the two of them forgetting their quarrel and end with them fooling around, but Ana was nothing if not stubborn, and she wanted to finally convince her lover that they were in danger. She placed her hands on the clown's sturdy chest and shoved, and when he didn't seem to notice that, she hissed, "Get off me!"

He growled lowly at her words, releasing her ear from his jagged teeth and pulling back so he could look at her face. "What do I have to do to satisfy you, hmm?"

Ana searched his golden eyes as she silently implored him to understand her concerns. The moment the shapeshifter caught her thoughts, he groaned and pulled away from her. "Pennywise, please -

"

"I am not going to kill her!" he seethed, and he stomped from the room, Ana following closely behind him.

"She's deceiving you," Ana persisted. "I don't know how, but I know she killed those kids for a reason - "

"To wake me up!" he interjected.

"Maybe that was part of it. But Pennywise, you said yourself that to use dark forces to open portals between dimensions, you would need the blood of innocents! I know she has some plan to get me out of the picture!"

"You *know,* you *know* nothing!" he argued, turning on her suddenly and grasping her shoulders. "All you have, little girl, are suspicions and envy, and the ability to annoy me endlessly!"

"I don't understand you!" she responded, trying to pull out of his grip. "You have me! I *know* you care for me, that you want me around! So what's the deal with letting her stay in Derry and go about her business, even though she threatened and hurt me?"

"You can't *understand* me, naive little fairy," he replied savagely, his voice low as he spoke. "You could never fully grasp what I am, what I am capable of, what I desire. Don't kid yourself."

Ana pushed back the raw emotion that was threatening to cut off her air supply as she processed his sickening statement, willing herself to keep her words coherent as she stared back at him. "And she does?" she spat, wondering how angry he could get if she kicked him in his costumed crotch. "Maybe it would be better for both of us if she sends me back somehow."

The look of astonishment that crossed the entity's features was not something Ana saw often, and she was left wondering if she had managed to hurt his feelings. He let go of her, his hands hanging limply at his sides. "That's not what you want," he said quietly, his eyes still locked on hers as he searched her mind.

"No, but I'm not sure that's not what *you* want," Ana replied. "And

there's only so much of this I'm willing to put up with."

"Pennywise doesn't want you to go away," he said defiantly. "He wants you here, at his side."

"Then get rid of her!" she replied quickly, stepping towards him to grip his gloved hand. "Pennywise, she's dangerous, and she's got some sort of hold on you. Maybe you don't realize it because of whatever ability she has. But she's going to try to kill me or send me away, and somehow she's keeping you from seeing her true intentions - '"

"I'm not killing her," he repeated, and Ana's heart sunk, knowing this was a losing battle. "And *no one* has the power to deceive me."

"You won't kill her, but what if her game all along has been to try to kill you?"

"She doesn't want to destroy me. She wants to serve me, to please me."

Ana groaned, mentally cursing the entity's childlike inability to listen to reason when he didn't want to. She wanted to keep arguing, keep throwing logic at him to persuade him of Lamia's deceptions, but she was exhausted both mentally and physically from their hunt. "Fine. Don't trust my instincts, Pennywise. But I still believe that she's planning something. And if she didn't have you under some sort of trance, then you'd have killed her the second you knew she existed." He stared at her, his golden eyes unblinking and his expression blank as he stood there. Ana wished she could have the entity's ability to delve into thoughts, even if just for a minute, so she could see what was going through his mind, or if he had no control over it when it came to Lamia.

The argument was left unresolved, as Ana felt there was no use at trying to continue at this point. They made their way to bed soon after, Ana having had taken a quick shower to rid herself of the dead child abuser's blood. She tried to shut off her mind as she laid there with Pennywise's arm draped across her torso, his hand tangled in her wet hair and combing through it lazily as they laid together. As she drifted closer and closer to sleep, her mind began to wander, thinking about all the nights they had been wrapped up in each

other's bodies like this, their quiet moments usually being tender and pensive. She was almost asleep when she heard the clown mumble something in her ear.

"Hmm?" Ana questioned, not having caught his quiet words in her almost dream-like state.

"What does love feel like?" he repeated, and Ana was suddenly feeling rather awake now.

"Oh," she replied, and she turned around to face him, his long arms going to wrap around her body. "Where is this coming from?"

"You were thinking about it just now," he said. "I've only seen you thinking about it when you're nearly asleep. Otherwise you try to force it away as soon as the word enters your mind."

Ana swallowed hard, this conversation quickly becoming more complicated than the numerous fights the two had shared. "Well, it's not an easy subject, Penny. Especially when it comes to us."

"You seem to think so," he said, his fingers trailing up and down her back as they talked. "But what does it feel like?"

Ana smiled at him then, and she planted a kiss on his ruby red lips. "It feels like this. How we feel right now, just being together."

Pennywise seemed satisfied with her answer, and pulled her into a deeper kiss. The seduction that he had started earlier when they were fighting continued then, and after the two were finished, Ana finally fell asleep. Her slumber was not as restful as she had hoped for however, as she had dreamed of her home world. She saw the fairy that had claimed to be her father once again, and he kept reassuring her that 'they', whoever that entailed, were coming to bring her home. Ana was confused at first when she woke up in the morning, looking around for him in the bedroom, only to find that Pennywise was still nestled in next to her, his ginger hair strewn about his face and drool dripping down his chin as he slept. She instantly forgot about the strange fairy and her dreams as she ran her fingers softly through his hair, remembering the conversation they had shared before going to sleep the night before.

Their day in the house was blissfully uneventful. Pennywise assisted Ana in making her meals, only protesting having to help clean up once, and they watched a few movies before starting the discussion on where to hunt that night. They had started to discuss going back to the bar when the clown's head snapped to attention, alerting Ana instantly that the blonde girl she despised was about to make an appearance.

"What?" she asked quickly, and Pennywise stood up from the couch. He always reminded her of a bloodhound that had caught a delicious scent when he acted like this.

"The sewers," was all he said, and suddenly he had disappeared into thin air. Ana looked around frantically, seeing nor hearing any sign of him.

"Get back here!" she yelled, her aggravation taking shape rather hastily. "You are *not* seeing her without me!" Her heart pounded in her chest as she waited for some sort of response, and she jumped as he was suddenly back at her side.

"Sweet girl," he said, his voice ominous as he spoke, "you might want to sit this one out."

Ana started to panic, thoughts of the two entities doing the worst things she could imagine flooding her mind. "I will not! Take me down there with you."

She yelped as she was scooped up in his arms then, and she was content that at least he wasn't trying to argue with her over the matter. As they made their way down to the sewers, she grew nervous as to what could possibly be waiting for them, and appalled that the blonde had the audacity to enter Pennywise's domain without permission once again. They descended the well, and Ana could start to make out some sort of high pitched, wavering noise. As they moved closer to it, Ana's stomach started to somersault as she recognized it. It was the terrified wailing of a child.

They entered Pennywise's dungeon, the only floating bodies surrounding the pile of junk being the deplorable adults that Ana had previously approved of, and had she not been in such a frenzied state,

she might have taken the time to admire them. But her eyes fell instantly to the blonde girl that was standing in front of the pile, blood covering her white skin and a screaming little boy clutched in her arms.

"You brought her," Lamia said to Pennywise, already sounding choked up with emotion as she spoke. Whether it was sadness or anger, Ana wasn't sure.

"She lives here," Pennywise replied, his gravelly voice echoing through the vicinity, and Ana could recognize that his attention was now locked onto the fearful boy that was still crying. "You, on the other hand, don't belong here."

Lamia, obviously taken aback at his words, suddenly dropped the little boy into the water, reaching down to grasp his arm forcefully so he couldn't run away from her. Ana gasped and took a step forward, but Lamia looked absolutely beside herself at this point, her long nails intentionally pointing to the boy's throat to stop Ana from coming any closer.

"Let him go," Ana said, trying to keep her voice calm. "Whatever it is you want, we can talk about without him here."

"I want to talk without *you* here!" she said shrilly, and Ana wondered what could have possibly brought this bout of crazy on, as when Ana had seen her last she had been confident and quite certain that she had the upper hand in whatever plan she had been cooking up. Ana turned her head ever so slightly to try and get a read on Pennywise, and as soon as her eyes turned his direction, Lamia let out a shriek of anger. "Don't you *look* at him!" She flailed her arms as she spoke, roughly yanking the child around as if she had forgotten he was in her grip.

"Why did you bring a child here?" Pennywise asked, and a drop of drool left his chin and spilled into the gray water below him.

"For you, Most Powerful One. For you to consume. I've taken the time to drive fear into him properly, and spill his blood as to make him smell enticing," she said, her expression of anguish now replaced by reverence.

"I don't eat kids anymore," he growled, and Ana couldn't help herself as she looked at him, seeing that he was visibly trying to keep his cool; no doubt, the fear on the boy was more than tempting at this point.

"That's the saddest thing I've ever heard," Lamia hissed. "She's castrated you, this sniveling little fairy - "

"Fuck you!" Ana barked, her fear for the boy's safety transforming to pure anger as she envisioned killing the entity.

"It's true!" Lamia continued, the crazed look back on her face as she stared at the Eater of Worlds. "You are most powerful, you can do *anything,* anything you desire! And you're listening to this disgusting little creature. I know she has some magical little fairy trance on you, doesn't she? Trying to convince you that I don't have *your* best interest in mind, that I want to *kill* you, it's completely absurd!"

"Which one is it, then?" Ana countered. "That's he's the most powerful thing *ever,* or that I somehow have some amazing, undetectable power over him? Because you can't have both!"

Lamia glared at her. "You know, I was going to let the Master kill this thing, but maybe I should do it just to shut you up!" Her hand left the boy's arm and went around his neck, his terrified noises becoming instantly muffled. Ana hoped that Pennywise was connected with her mind just then and knew what she was intending to happen, because she wasn't going to waste any more time.

"You should be with *me!"* Lamia said to the clown, almost pleading now. "I will let you do anything that you want, and I will never shame you for it. I will embrace it, and praise you for it, and be everything that you want! You *need* me, Dominus!" Pennywise didn't even seem to hear her proposal. He was still focused on the delicious smelling morsel that was being presented to him, drool now dripping down his chin and all over his silver costume.

"What happened, Lamia?" Ana said, taking a calm step forward, "Why the sudden desperation?"

Lamia sneered at her, not saying anything as her entire body shook.

"He thinks he *loves* you!" she shrieked. Ana was appalled, knowing that the entity knew their most intimate moments, and had probably spied on them from the moment they woke up.

"That's right, bitch," Ana said, readying for the repercussions of her actions. "He does, and I love him, and you need to get the fuck out of here, because there's no one in this fucking town for you!" She took another step forward, inching closer to the boy. "He doesn't want you!"

The female entity let out a bellow as she lunged for Ana, releasing her hold on the boy in the process. Ana was knocked to the ground and lying in sewer water in an instant, and she felt long claws impale her abdomen as Lamia attacked her in a blind rage. Long teeth started to take shape in the blonde's mouth, and just as she was about to bite down on Ana's throat, she thrust her arm in front of her, her wrist and forearm taking the blow.

Lamia was shrieking again as a long, black tentacle started to wrap itself around her own neck, and she was yanked off of Ana violently. Ana sat herself up in time to see the entity being thrown through the air, landing far enough away that Ana had enough time to scramble to her feet and pull the child into her arms. Pennywise was after Lamia now, still in clown form as he rushed at her, but multiple black appendages had sprouted from his back to aid in his assault. They advanced further into the sewers and out of sight, and Ana started to frantically look the child over as he continued to cry in her arms. He had long cuts on his arms and legs, but thankfully they were mostly scabbed over and no longer bleeding.

Her first instinct was to wait for Pennywise to return to her. But she had navigated the sewers enough times by now that she knew that she could find her way out, and even if she got lost in the dark, Pennywise would eventually be back and be able to find her in an instant. So she started the long journey in the blackness to find her way out, hoping to get to town in a timely manner and get the boy back to his family. As she splashed through the cold water with the kid in her arms, all she could think was that she was sick of everything happening *to* her, and was ready to start being the one to *make* things happen instead.

11. Chapter 11

The trek through the dark sewers was a cold and painful one. Ana had to stop several times to catch her breath, and to try to gauge how much blood she was losing by feeling the slick wetness with her hands. The boy, whose named she learned was Jax, was quiet as they moved, his cries replaced by shivering and the occasional soft whimper. She tried to carry him for as long as she possibly could, but as she was slowly succumbing to the hypothermia that was threatening to take over her body, she finally had to make the child walk beside her.

The Barrens were a welcome sight as they finally walked out into the moonlight, and Ana scooped up Jax once again, driven to get him out the water as soon as she could, the shore and the woods beyond that another difficult walk, but at least a haven compared to what they had just journeyed through. As soon as they were on dry land, Ana placed him gently back onto the ground, going to sit with her back supported by a thick tree trunk. She was finally able to open her shirt to visualize her several puncture wounds, and she was disheartened to see that they looked rather deep and already starting to redden from infection. The blood was still oozing out of her, her injuries aggravated from the difficult hike and carrying the child. She sighed and buttoned her shirt again, taking a closer look at the mangled flesh on her forearm from Lamia's bite, the wounds appearing to have clotted off now.

"Does it hurt?" the little boy asked, his tear and blood stained face looking upon her with worry.

"Only a little," she said, doing her best to flash him a smile. "But it will get better."

"The bad lady cut me," he said, sniffling, and he pulled up a sleeve to show Ana one of the sliced arms she had seen earlier. She was grateful to see that it was completely scabbed over now, and it was likely that any fresh blood on him was from her instead.

"I know, Jax. I'm sorry she did that to you."

"Is the bad lady coming back?"

"No," Ana said, hoping with all her might that she wasn't lying to him. "She won't come back. We're going to get you home, as soon as we walk through these woods." She took a deep breath and heaved herself to her feet, clutching her abdomen in one hand and reaching for the boy's hand with the other. "I wish I could carry you, but I'm getting tired." As they started their slow pace through the trees, she hoped that Pennywise would return to her soon, wondering what was taking so long. She couldn't sense him nearby, and she was growing increasingly worried that trying to do this journey while injured was a foolish move.

It could have been hours by the time they made it out of the woods and onto the road, but Ana couldn't be sure. She could tell that her mind was growing fuzzy from fatigue and her gait was definitely slowing, and she willed herself to push on. Finally, she felt him. Pennywise, wherever he was, was getting closer to her, and she stopped moving then, ungracefully sitting cross legged on the sidewalk to wait for him. She pulled Jax into her arms to try to warm him up some, and make sure Pennywise had control of his appetite before approaching.

There was the silhouette of a tall, slender man approaching from the road, and when Ana could make out that it was Robert's handsome face looking at her and the boy, she almost started crying in relief.

"Are you okay?" she asked as he grew closer, looking at him apprehensively.

"I'm fine. I fed." He bent down to her, pulling her to her feet by her upper arms, and flashing a charming smile at the boy that was now standing next to them. "Hey there, sport. I think it's time we get you home." He lifted the child into his arms, giving him a quick once over before reaching for Ana's hand. She stumbled as he attempted to resume his brisk pace.

"Can you keep up, sweet girl?" he asked, concern in his eyes as he looked her up and down.

"I don't know," she answered honestly. "I'm not feeling the greatest."

"We should probably get to the hospital," Robert said, gently taking her injured arm in his hand and looking it over. He paused a little bit too long as he examined the wounds, and Ana knew he was craving her blood then.

"No. He goes home first."

"It wouldn't hurt to have him looked at, too," Robert argued. Ana was about to protest that his parents were probably worried sick, when she was suddenly scooped up by one arm and slung unceremoniously over his shoulder. In her right mind she would have struggled and tried to free herself from the undignified hold he had on her, but she surrendered to her fatigue, at least happy that she wouldn't have to walk to their destination.

"You should have waited for me," he scolded as he walked down the road carrying a woman and a kid like they weighed nothing.

"I'm tired of being the damsel in distress," she muttered, wincing, as being bounced over his shoulder was irritating her wounds.

"All you did was tire yourself out and make your injuries worse. I could have taken us right up to the house and this whole thing would be much easier."

"I didn't know how long you would be gone," Ana argued quietly. "Besides, when you were chasing and killing Asmod, you were gone for a long time then, too." She put the topic of Lamia being dead out into the dark night, wishing with everything she had that he would just agree with her and confirm her assumptions.

"I didn't kill her," he replied calmly, and Ana suddenly felt more drained than she had all night. She wanted to argue, to scream at him and ask what the hell was wrong with him, demand answers as to why not, but she just couldn't muster it.

"That's that, then," she said, nearly whispering. "If you didn't do it tonight, you aren't going to, are you?" She wondered what could have possibly taken him so long to get back to her if he hadn't chased her into the atmosphere, her mind picturing all sorts of derogatory and immoral things that the two could have possibly been up to in her

absence.

"I exiled her from Derry. She won't be anywhere near us," he said. Ana didn't reply this time, knowing that he was transfixed, the argument hopeless. She didn't speak again before they reached the hospital.

Jax was given a bed in the emergency department almost immediately, Ana and Robert having to answer a lot of frantic questions from the staff about how the child was injured, and if they weren't his parents, why was he was with them. Robert was able to get through to them with his powers of controlling people's perspectives that they had been on a night hike through the woods and had found him, his injuries sustained from an unwitnessed attack. They seemed satisfied with that answer, and Ana was given her own bed after an hour or so of waiting. They explained away her wounds by saying they had been ambushed by an angry bear, although Ana knew that if Robert had suggested that she had been impaled by a squirrel, they would have accepted that, too. She received two bags of blood and some antibiotics, not unlike the time she had been hospitalized after Pennywise had bitten her all those years ago. But this time, Robert was at her side the entire time during her treatments.

Ana was finally able to rest easily when she heard that Jax's parents arrived at the hospital to claim him, and it was well into the morning before she was deemed well enough discharge back home. She teased Robert about how gentle and attentive he was being with her, trying to guide her as she slowly made her way to the front door of the house but not touch her injuries at all. But even when she was lightly mocking him for his worry over her comfort, she was grateful that he still felt that way, even being under Lamia's devious influence.

The couple spent the next three days holed up on the house together, Pennywise's time being taken up with tending to Ana's needs and changing her bandages. He even cooked meals for her, trying to mimic what he'd seen her do in the kitchen or the few things he'd seen in the movies they'd watched together. She found herself trying to choke down some rather burnt eggs one morning, but she couldn't help but feel appreciative for his efforts nonetheless. She only spoke up about the entity's cooking skills when he served her frozen french

fries, and she was surprised that it didn't sour his mood at all. She grimaced when he decided to throw them directly into the microwave, but when she started to get off the couch to help him, she was quickly pushed back down by her shoulders and told to stay put.

"Penny," she said, laughing as he looked down at her with a stern look on his painted face, "I'm capable of putting something in the oven."

"You've helped me with my food. I'm doing the same." He said it so matter-of-factually, the idea of reciprocation so natural to him now that Ana was astounded.

"Speaking of which, when's the last time you've eaten?" she asked, settling back onto the couch so he'd go back into the kitchen and stop staring her down.

"Before the hospital," he grunted, smashing the buttons on the oven so hard that Ana jumped.

"You have to push them one at a time with a finger," she said, shaking her head. "Not punch it."

"Oh," he said, randomly jabbing them now. She had no idea what temperature he was setting, but she decided not to say anything about it.

"So you need to eat soon, Penny. I'd hate for you to take a bite out of me the next time you help me with my dressings." But the clown continued to insist that he was fine, and they continued on with their evening at home. Ana forced down the now cooked but soggy potatoes when Pennywise gave them to her again, and then she reluctantly allowed him to help wash her in the bath, his gesture making her feel cared for and helpless at the same time. On the fourth day of their new routine, Ana knew they had no choice but for Pennywise to find prey. When he changed her bandages, his eyes were nearly blood red instead of their usual gold, and he was shaking with forced restraint as he cleaned the wounds.

"Penny, let me do it," she said, holding out her hand for the slightly bloodied gauze that he had in his fingers. He finally handed it over,

standing to leave the bedroom as she finished her task. She wandered out when she was done, finding him standing in the kitchen, staring brazenly at nothing with his arms down at his sides.

"You have to hunt," Ana said quietly, not wanting to get too close to him when he was in this state in case she smelled a little too appealing to him right then.

"I know."

"So go," she said, growing nervous at his stillness, part of her wondering if he was suddenly going to pounce.

"You'll be here alone."

"Penny, if Lamia is supposedly 'exiled' and far away as you said, then I'll be fine."

"It's not that," he said, suddenly turning to look at her, and the pained look on his face made Ana wonder how fine she was actually going to be. His eyes were still nearly solid scarlet in color, and drool was flowing freely down his front as his sharp teeth gleamed at her. "Pennywise just doesn't want to be away from his sweet girl."

Ana was moved at his statement, wishing they had time to right then to explore the topic further, but she knew now wasn't the time unless she wanted to risk being his next meal. "I'll be safer here than I will be out there in this state. Just go, please."

He was gone in an instant, ultimately listening to her request. When he first presented his emotional turmoil at being away from her, she was touched but also felt like the reaction was rather melodramatic. But even as the first minutes passed that he was away from her and hunting somewhere in Derry, Ana was soon feeling the same way, the way she always did when she was stuck in the house and she had to wait for him to return to her. What intensified it now, was undoubtedly knowing that he felt the same way.

They continued this less than ideal way of hunting for the next week or so, with Pennywise leaving Ana alone in the house as he went to feed. Neither of them enjoyed it, as they had grown rather

accustomed to being around one another almost constantly, but the entity insisted that she allow herself more time to heal before she joined him again. When he agreed to have her come with him one night, Ana was overjoyed, not only because she was feeling like a shut in, but because she had missed the adrenaline pumping through her veins as she stalked her lover's prey with him. But if she were ever in a hypothetical situation where someone asked her if she enjoyed being the one to deliver the killing blow, she would animatedly deny it, having convinced herself at this point that she was incapable of taking pleasure in such a horrid thing.

They went to the Blueberry Moose, Ana wanting to have a few drinks to celebrate feeling better and leaving the house again. As she downed shot after shot with Robert sitting next to her at the bar, they started to survey the crowd for a target. So far, the potentials were a drug dealer, a crook lawyer and a man that hadn't paid his taxes in about five years.

"Not juicy enough," Ana said, starting to feel the warmth flow through her body. She placed a hand on Robert's knee, letting it slowly trail up towards his crotch.

"Eventually we're going to run out of people you deem 'juicy enough'," Robert pointed out. "Then what am I supposed to eat?"

Ana scoffed, taking a sip of her vodka cranberry as she looked about the room. "Are you kidding me? This town is horrible. Everyone's awful."

"So why even discuss it? Just point to one and that'll be it."

Ana laughed into her drink, spilling some on her shirt. "Damn it," she groaned, wiping at the stain rather ineffectively with her hand.

"Don't fret over it. Red fluid looks good on you," Robert said, giving her a devilish grin, and she smacked him on the shoulder. The door of the bar opened, and two women walked in, and at first Ana paid little attention to them, starting to decide if the drug dealer was worthy enough for their upcoming game. "The black haired one," Robert said, and Ana turned to look. "She drowned her twin toddlers in the bathtub. Pleaded insanity, got out because the facility was

overcrowded. They put 'good behavior' on her record but she just fucked the guards."

"Bingo," Ana said, taking the last full shot that was in front of them. "How do you want to do this?"

Robert smiled at her enthusiasm, and she couldn't resist reaching to his face to brush back a little bit of hair that had fallen onto his forehead. "Let's just see where the night takes us, sweet girl."

It started with Robert going up to the baby killer and her friend, charming them a bit and offering to buy them drinks. Once they were comfortable and chatting for a while, he proposed a rather raunchy threesome, inviting both women to follow him to the back entrance and into the alley towards his imaginary car. As Robert and his prey walked side by side, engrossed in some bawdy conversation, Ana sneaked up behind the friend, a blow to the head with a beer bottle instantly knocking her unconsciousness. Their target whipped around to find the source of the noise of glass shattering, shrieking as she saw Ana standing over her companion.

"That's my boyfriend you're trying to fuck," she said lowly, brandishing the hunting blade she had used on other nights in one hand. She saw the first inkling of fear form on the woman's face, and Ana sneered at her as she stood there, frozen in place.

"Get this crazy bitch out of - " she started to say to Robert, turning to look at him, but he was gone, now replaced by a large, bipedal monster covered with black scales. Its three eyes were glowing bright red in the night, and two misshapen horns had sprouted above its gaping, snarling jaw.

She continued to scream even as she ran, and Ana laughed as she noticed the murderer trying to sprint effectively in high heels. Pennywise stood at Ana's side in this demonic form to give the woman a bit of a head start, continuing to snivel and howl to let her know they were still there. After the raven haired lady got a couple of blocks ahead of them, the monster motioned with its gnarled hand for Ana to climb on its back, and she did just that, giggling as it took off after its prey in an uneven trot.

They chased her to the woods, and once they were in a section that Ana knew well, she climbed off the entity's back, telling him she wanted the chance to finish the job. She took immense gratification in viciously calling after the terrified woman, picturing her drowning her helpless children in the tub as they looked to their heartless mother for the help and comfort that was denied to them.

Ana closed in on her as she tripped over a jutting root, and Ana's fury only grew when the woman had managed to kick her square in the knee as she attempted to defend herself.

"Did your babies kick at you when you were killing them?" Ana asked, and as the woman looked up at her in shock, she drove the blade swiftly into her rib cage, pulling it out just as quickly as she had driven it in. She picked another spot, stabbed, pulled it out. "Or did they accept their fates that their horrid mommy bestowed upon them?" Blood was spurting everywhere as she stabbed again, again, again. Ana barely registered the screaming when it was happening, and when it stopped, she didn't notice that either. She kept jabbing the knife into flesh, and only when Pennywise placed a hand on her wrist to stop her movements did she realize that she had started to picture Lamia under her, the blonde being the one to take the blows from her attack.

"You're going to ruin the meat," Pennywise said, taking the blade out of her grasp. "*And* you're going to open your wounds again if you keep it up."

"Sorry, you're right," Ana said, breathing heavily. Pennywise helped her to her feet, smiling as he looked her up and down.

"You should see how delicious you look right now," he murmured, placing a gloved hand on her cheek.

"Am I covered in blood?"

"You're *soaked.*"

The endorphins kept flowing through Ana as Pennywise gorged himself on the freshly butchered body, and as they made their way to the sewers with the leftovers, Ana felt as though she had a new found

confidence. She relished in the feeling of the horrid woman writhing underneath her, and it brought her thoughts again to a certain blonde entity that she loathed.

"You'd never be able to kill her that way," Pennywise said, responding to her thoughts.

"But if I found a way, how would that make you feel?" she asked, feeling cocky and still slightly buzzed from the alcohol that still was in her system. Pennywise shrugged. "So you wouldn't care if I killed her?" she pressed on, exasperated.

"You wouldn't be able to kill one of us. But if you figure out a way, go for it."

Ana shook her head in disbelief, astonished that whatever ability Lamia had to influence Pennywise into not killing her didn't spill over into his caring or not if someone else did. The logic was about as erratic as Lamia was, mirroring her lunacy and making Ana wonder once again how unstable the young entity could be.

As drunk as she was on booze and adrenaline, Ana could never forget that conversation. The next morning, she was hell bent on figuring out a way to rid them of the dangerous nuisance, knowing that Pennywise was not going to help her. It gave her a drive she hadn't felt in a long while, purpose flooding her very being knowing that only she was going to be able to keep them safe. Her first thoughts were to speak to the new guardian that had replaced Maturin, but she had no idea how to even go about that without Pennywise's cooperation. Her next move, albeit a rather less cosmic and therefore far less exciting one, was to talk to Mike Hanlon.

Any mention of Mike, and Pennywise had grown instantly jealous in the past, so Ana did her best to try to not think about him as they went about their morning. At one point, Pennywise started to glower at her as she stood doing the dishes, so she turned to using her tried and true seduction techniques on him, effectively distracting them both as they nearly knocked over the table in their vigorous activities. Once that was done, she announced that she wanted to go to the library, not knowing what her plan was after that, hoping that she could think on her feet quickly enough to distract the Eater of

Worlds.

"What are we doing here?" Robert asked as they entered the old building, the scent of parchment and mothballs hitting their senses.

"Just thought we'd change it up," Ana replied, praying for a distraction of any kind. Luck must have been on her side that morning, because the library was full of school children, and Robert lit up when he started to hone in on their thoughts. There was a large projector screen set up on one of the walls, and it was playing a documentary on World War II, no doubt instilling a little bit of fear into some of them.

Ana didn't waste time, heading towards the front desk where the ancient looking librarian stood watch, and she requested the information for previous staff members. She was relieved that she didn't have to have an argument about getting the information, because Ana was ready to fight dirty if she needed to. She thanked the old woman wholeheartedly as she glanced down at Mike's name on the card in her hand, smiling at the fact that the address on there was somewhere in Florida. She realized then that Mike had probably intentionally left his information there so it would be easy to obtain, since he had told her ten years ago to call him if she wanted to.

Seeing that Robert was now standing behind the group of kids that were seated on the floor to watch the war film, Ana quickly made her way to one of the tablets that was available to the public, searching frantically for a way to dial a phone number from it. Once she opened the right program, she punched the number in, throwing the headphone buds in her ears as the line on the other end started to ring. Her eyes never left Robert as she waited for an answer, her heart pounding in her chest, anticipating Pennywise's wrath after all of this.

"Hello?" a low, male voice answered finally, and Ana felt a knot rise in her throat.

"Mike?" she responded meekly.

"Speaking."

She didn't really know how to start. Mike had mentioned to her that the members of the Losers Club that had moved away all those years ago had forgotten their time in Derry, and that he had to convince them to come back, then having to fill them in once they got there. Even as she searched for the right words to explain who she was and what she wanted, she cursed her stupidity, knowing that he probably had no memory of anything that had happened here, let alone the information she was seeking to help her with Lamia.

"Mike, it's Ana. From Derry. Do you remember Derry?"

"Yes," he replied smoothly, and Ana breathed a sigh of relief. At least she wasn't starting from scratch.

"Do you remember who I am?"

"Yes, Ana. I kept journals, read them almost every day to make sure I don't forget."

"Oh, thank God," Ana said. "Well, the reason I'm calling - "

"Are you alright? Do you want us to get you out?"

Ana was caught off guard. "No, Mike. I was wondering if I could get information on other entities, because there's another one in town that's causing some problems."

Mike was silent for a bit. "I shouldn't be surprised, should I? That you're concerned about some other evil, but not the one that's the root of it all?"

Robert's attention was suddenly off the children, his eyes moving over to where Ana sat. She knew then that she only had a few moments left before he interrupted.

"Look, Mike, there's no time right now, I'll have to call you back."

"No need. I'll be seeing you soon."

Ana wasn't sure she was registering what she was hearing, and now Robert was angrily stalking towards her, a sneer spreading across his face.

"What?" she asked, her thoughts a jumbled mess now.

"Someone called me a few days ago to let us know that It was awake early. Me and Bill are driving there now, we're about two hours away."

She ended the call before Robert reached the desk she was at, not only because she didn't want him to hear Mike's voice coming through her headphones, but because she was so startled at the sudden revelation. As Robert reached her, he bent down, placing his large hands on either side of her face and forcing her to look up at him. She could tell he was searching her mind, an angry look on his face as he rifled through it. Then, he started to laugh.

"My friends are coming!" he shouted, startling most of the kids in the room.

12. Chapter 12

Ana and Robert's walk back to Neibolt house was not a tranquil one, as the two bickered endlessly about the impending return of some of the Losers Club. The entity was utterly delighted at the notion of two of them coming back to Derry, repeating multiple variations of how excited he was and not even bothering to answer Ana's voiced concerns. Only when she vaguely suggested that Mike and Bill had somehow come up with a new plan to kill him, did Robert's disposition suddenly swing to one of vexation.

"Idiotic girl," he feverishly spat at her. "After all this time, do you still believe me to be something that can be so easily destroyed?"

"I don't know what to believe anymore!" she cried passionately as they crossed the threshold into the house. "I *thought* you were some untouchable force, but Lamia still has some power to influence you, so anything is possible - "

Her contemptuous statement was rewarded with her frail human body being slammed into the wall behind her, and Robert's lean frame was forcefully pressed against it to keep her in place. As he looked upon her with fury in his blue eyes, Ana felt tears start to form in her own. Crying was not something she had done a lot of lately, but she had grown mentally weary from the constant bombardments that had come her way since waking from their slumber.

"I am not," Robert snarled lowly, his forearm firmly placed into her throat almost as a warning, although Ana knew he might just be doing it because he couldn't help himself in his rage, "having this argument about her *again*."

"If you care about me *at all*, you'll stop and think about this. What she's planning to do to us, what the Losers might try to do to you!"

The handsome man that was pressed up against her removed his arm from her neck, going to grip her jaw tightly in his large hand instead. He forced her to look up at him, his eyes unblinking as he spoke. "Pennywise doesn't like being ordered around, little girl," he purred,

the clown's gravelly voice starting to break through Robert's usual suave timbre.

"All I'm asking you to do is consider the danger that we're in."

"What danger?" he asked incredulously, a short laugh escaping his throat. "Lamia isn't even in Derry anymore - "

"What's going to stop her from coming back?" Ana countered. "She called Mike. She obviously has something in mind!"

"Speaking of which," Robert said, his plump lips pulling back into a snarl as she continued to argue with him, "Funny that you're so bent out of shape over her calling him, considering you did the same thing."

"To ask for help with getting rid of Lamia, not to invite him back here!" Ana cried. Robert let go of her face now, taking a few steps back from her. He was hunched over slightly, a barbaric look gleaming in his eyes.

"I should kill him just for offering to take you away from me," he growled.

Ana rolled her eyes, quickly becoming exasperated with the entire exchange. "Enough. Just forget about it." She walked out of the room feeling utterly defeated, knowing that this conversation was going nowhere and she'd never be able to convince the entity that something was brewing.

"Hey," Robert barked after her, "We're not finished here!" He was behind her in an instant, following her up the staircase and towards the bedroom. He reached out to grab her arm, and she swiveled around on her heel to face him.

"Do you love me?" she asked, fighting back the emotion that was threatening to erupt from her chest. Robert stared at her, his perfect eyebrows furrowing in confusion. He didn't answer her. "I love you, Penny. If anything were to ever happen to you, I'd be lost. That's why I'm so worried."

"From what you've shown me about it," he said slowly, his features

still twisted up in contemplation, like he was trying to solve an incredibly difficult math equation in his head, "I think I love you."

Ana smiled at him, a few tears spilling from her eyes. The wording wasn't ideal, and his face still looked like he was smelling something rancid, but she was fully aware that a statement like that coming from the Eater of Worlds was not something to be taken lightly. The will to continue their dispute was lost when the lovers made their way to the bed, falling into their familiar routine, but this time being unique in that it was exceptionally tender. Afterwards, when they were lying in bed and holding each other, Robert had transformed back into Pennywise, and Ana assumed his thoughts were on the two men that were making their way back to Derry. Hers were, as well.

"Do you think they're going to have the rest of them come back?" Ana asked quietly as the clown ran his long fingers up and down her arm.

"Pennywise hopes so," he said with a low chuckle. She fought the urge to argue with him again, to try to convince him to stay away from Mike and Bill, to stay alert for Lamia. But she knew it was a lost cause at this point. The clown's sense of self-pride rarely wavered in the time that she had been with him, and he had completely persuaded himself that he was beyond the reach of any threats.

She silently prayed to whatever gods that would listen that they could just stay in bed for the rest of the day, that any disturbances that dared to try to infiltrate their serenity would at least wait until morning. To her dismay, her prayers were not only unanswered, but were thrown back into her face.

"They're here!" Pennywise suddenly shouted gleefully. He popped up out of bed with so much fervor that Ana half expected him to start dancing in celebration.

"Penny," she said, scrambling to get out of the bed so she could get his attention. "Wait, we have to plan this - "

"No, *we* don't," he answered, pulling her to him in a tight embrace. "Pennywise is going to go see them, and Ana is going to stay put!"

"But - "

"I don't want our old friend Mike laying eyes on you," he growled, and he planted a long kiss on her lips, then released his grip on her. When Ana opened her eyes, he was gone.

Her first instinct was to cry out for him, or to scream out his name in anger, but she knew it wasn't worth the effort. He was gone, determined to torment the Losers, and she knew it was likely that her safety and everything that she had warned him about was the furthest thing on his mind right then. Her heart sank as she realized that Lamia was succeeding in whatever game she had concocted. Pennywise still had no desire to kill her, was more worried about another man looking at Ana than her actual safety, and now he was completely distracted and far away from Ana, who severely needed his protection right then. As she descended the staircase, she wondered how far Lamia's spell over the ancient entity reached, if she could eventually hold even more power over him, what her final objective in all this really was.

She went to the kitchen to get the same knife that she had used in her previous encounter with Lamia, remembering quite vividly that it had done little to help her, yet she was unwilling to be without a weapon right then. She debated briefly on whether or not to stay put, but she knew being in this house was leaving her as vulnerable as would be anywhere else. So she left.

Ana headed down the sidewalk at a brisk walk, her fingers tightly gripping the blade that she was more likely to trip and impale herself on than actually hurting an evil entity that was intending to hurt her. Her plan was to go to the hotel to look for the Losers, possibly to try reasoning with them, and if not, at least she would be in closer proximity to Pennywise. If they weren't there, then her next stop would be the library.

The intended plans were interrupted almost instantly. Ana had made it only a few blocks before her path was blocked by a blonde woman dressed head to toe in black. As Ana took in the entity's face, she saw a sickening smile plastered there, her dark purple lips spread so wide it almost looked painful.

"Hello, little fairy," she said, and Ana stayed rooted to her spot. "You might as well drop the knife. We both know it's not going to do any

of us any good."

"Fuck you!" Ana sneered. Lamia's clawed hand shot out, gripping Ana by the throat, and her other hand painfully twisted her wrist until the knife dropped to the ground.

"Language!" Lamia scolded, giggling as she gripped Ana's arm and forced her to turn around, her talons now digging into the back of her neck. "We have company, and they don't take kindly to that sort of thing."

Being made to turn around, Ana suddenly saw two men standing there, both of them impossibly tall, and rather refined looking, their hands folded neatly in front of them as they watched the two women. One of them, a man with perfect porcelain skin that almost seemed to glow and dazzling green eyes, looked Ana up and down with such an air of smugness that Ana instantly wanted to slap him. When his eyes came back up to her face, he turned to his companion, a man with rich brown skin and shiny, flowing black hair. They started to speak quietly to each other, and Ana strained to hear what they were saying. It took her a few seconds to realize they weren't speaking a language that she recognized. But there was one thing that she could pick out of the words they were muttering: Raanana. The fairy who had claimed to be her father in her dreams had called her that.

"You opened the portal, didn't you?" Ana hissed at Lamia. "That's why you killed all those kids!"

"It was nothing, really," Lamia replied coolly, and out of the corner of her eye Ana saw her shrug her shoulders. "They were already looking for you. I just told them where you were."

"Pennywise is going to be livid when he finds out what you've done!" Ana said, and Lamia let go of her. She had half a mind to try to run, but before she could barely finish the thought, both men had their grips on her arms. "Let go of me!" she cried, trying to pry herself from their hold.

"Don't you *dare* speak his name ever again!" Lamia growled at her, all traces of the smile she previously wore now gone. "With you gone, he'll finally be able to see what he's been missing with me. I just hope

he can forget you completely...although I have a feeling I might be able to help him with that."

Ana spewed every curse word she knew at the blonde and tried to pull her arms free as she envisioned strangling her, but her captors merely pulled her backwards towards them to keep her in place.

"I told you she's probably not the same as you remember her," Lamia said to the two men. "The humanity has probably ruined her." She heard the men speaking to each other once again, her inability to understand them making her angrier. "You can take her now, probably should before he notices. Just give me my payment."

Ana watched as the green-eyed man reached into his pants pocket and revealed a glowing, red vial. He handed it over to Lamia, although he seemed to do so with some hesitation. As Lamia took the glass bottle in her hands, the smile returned.

"What's that?" Ana demanded, knowing she was far from entitled to that information.

Lamia tore her eyes away from the glowing scarlet in her hands long enough to look at Ana. "Power."

Ana opened her mouth to interrogate the blonde further, but suddenly the breath was knocked out of her, and the world around her seemed to dissolve in a whirl of blinding white light, her body feeling like it was floating midair. It seemed to last for only a few moments, and Ana felt her feet hit solid ground again. After her eyes adjusted to the normal amount of day light around her and she could see again, she saw that they were in a clearing in the woods. She barely needed to look around to know where they were. It was the same clearing where Asmod had taken her ten years ago and had attempted to entice Pennywise into eating her, a place that had been referred to as sacred.

The man with the long black hair let go of her and headed towards the boulder that she had sat on all those years ago. From thin air he produced a glowing golden sphere about the size of a grapefruit, placing in the center of the large rock. There was a loud rumble and then suddenly white, searing light shot up from the rock and into the

sky, the force of it crackling in the atmosphere like a thunderstorm.

"Let me go," Ana said, turning to look at the 'man' that still had a hold on her. His expression was of complete indifference as he gazed down at her. "Please. I don't want to leave, I can't!"

He started to force her to walk towards the blinding light, and simultaneously she felt the familiar sensation that told her Pennywise was coming. Knowing he was near made her feel all the more desperate, and she started to panic.

"Please, *please* don't take me! I'll do anything, just go back home, leave me here, please!" she pleaded. They didn't listen to her. The next thing she knew, she was being hoisted up onto the rock, both men now grasping her again. Just as they pulled her into the portal with them, she caught the blurred image of a clown rushing towards them through the clearing; she cried out for him, unable to move as she felt her body being pulled up into the sky and out of Earth's atmosphere.

The light around her started to flash different colors as they traveled, and even through all of those dazzling hues she could see that the environment around them was dark and vast. She could see stars in the distance, and the longer they were in the portal, she started to see galaxies take shape. She would have been absolutely astounded at the cosmos around her, but she suddenly saw three twirling orange lights right outside the tunnel of brightness they were in, and she knew it was him. The deadlights seemed to be chasing them, and she wished with every ounce of her soul that he would stop and turn around, to go back to Earth. She knew if he followed them to her home planet, he would put himself in grave danger. She hoped with anguish that somehow he could still hear her thoughts, that she loved him but needed him to go back. Finally, the deadlights stopped their chase, and she sobbed as she continued to rush away from them, their orange glow out of sight within seconds.

She still felt the tears falling from her eyes as the tube of light around them disintegrated and Ana felt ground underneath her once again. There were more voices chattering around her as her eyes took their time to adjust again, and once she could see, the first thing her eyes landed on was the fairy with the long white beard and hair. He

looked exactly like he had in her dreams, his blue eyes so bright that they resembled sapphires, and the rich purple robes covering his sparking white skin. He was speaking to her in a calm, kind tone, but she still couldn't understand him. As she looked around the room in confusion, she felt the fairy gently grasp her hand in his. She looked down, seeing that her own hand was ivory and sparkling, and she reached to her head to find that her hair was incredibly long. She ran some through her fingers and pulled the strands in front of her face, confirming that it was the bright blue that she had seen in Asmod's vision so long ago.

Ana knew then that she was really home.

13. Chapter 13

Fairies continued to bustle around Ana as she tried to grasp her current whereabouts. The room they were in was large and spacious, with vaulted ceilings and white stone walls. There were golden pillars interspersed throughout that ran the entire length of the walls, breaking off like tangled tree branches and connecting once they reached the ceilings. When Ana's eyes fell on massive stone statues of various animals, she recalled seeing this place in one of Asmod's visions. They were in the temple where she had been taken ten years ago.

At first, she was vaguely aware that hands were touching and fussing over her, and once she focused on that fact, she realized that when she had transformed from human back to her original form, she had lost her clothing. A female fairy with bubblegum pink hair was trying to pull white robes on her, and Ana obliged rather enthusiastically when she realized her 'father' was still standing in front of her. When she was covered and feeling a bit less exposed, she locked eyes with a tall male that had wavy fire-red hair and dazzling green eyes; he was watching her with a familiar sense of disdain, and she somehow knew that this was one of the same 'men' that had taken her away from Derry and was now back in his fairy form.

"It's okay, I don't like you either," she said to him, and the chattering around her stopped momentarily as everyone around her stopped to stare. She heard 'Raanana' and incoherent words following it from the fairy with the purple robes, and she couldn't help but feel like his tone sounded scolding, although she wasn't entirely sure if the fairies understood her or not.

Suddenly, she was being ushered away from where she stood, and she was being guided by multiple hands towards what looked like the middle of the temple. When they stopped moving, she found herself standing inside a circle made of numerous colorful plants and flowers, and the fairies there had all grown silent and were staring at her. She looked around, anticipating whatever was supposed to happen next, beautiful faces all looking at her like they were expecting her to tell them something important or burst into flames.

Then, the same girl with the bubblegum pink hair pushed her way through the small crowd, coming to stand in the circle with Ana. Unlike the male with the flaming red hair, Ana seemed to take an instant liking to this one. She spoke quietly, as if only wishing for Ana to hear, and then to her immense surprise, she bowed down before her. Ana was about to laugh uncomfortably and tell her to knock it off, when the rest of the fairies in the room did the same, all except for the one that had claimed to be her father in her dreams. Ana stood in awkward silence as their faces remained pointed towards the floor, and finally not being able to take it any longer, Ana enthusiastically gestured for them to stand back up.

The fairy that was in the circle with her was smiling kindly at her now, and when she stretched out her sparkling hands towards her to touch her temples, Ana didn't even feel the slightest bit of apprehension. Her good faith was tested not a moment later, however, as Ana felt a jolt go through her and then an intense rush go through her body, like a painless bolt of electricity. She fell to her knees as the energy continued to penetrate every cell in her body, and then images started to run through her mind like a movie in fast forward.

How long she stayed on the floor trying not to lose her sanity as her memories came rushing back to her she couldn't know. When the overwhelming sensation finally subsided, she was lying on her side in the circle of flowers, her chest heaving as she tried to catch her breath. One of the fairies reached down to help her, and Ana pushed him away without hesitation.

"Don't touch me," she wheezed in her native tongue.

"Lady Raanana, I only wish to help you. You look distressed," he replied, but she refused his help, pushing herself off the ground by herself.

"You would be, too, if you had just been bombarded with a lifetime of information in a matter of seconds," she replied, brushing off her wrinkled robes as she stood. Her father never approved of looking disheveled.

She looked around the room for the fairy with the pink hair that had

triggered the whole thing, and when she found her, she wasn't surprised to see that she looked as distraught as Ana felt right then. Ana looked at her for a few seconds, giving her a slight nod to reassure her that everything was alright.

"I want to be in the company of my father, and Newlyn, and no one else," Ana said, authority coming back to her tone like it had never been gone. The fae around her started to disperse instantly, and Ana reached out for pink-haired Newlyn, giving her oldest friend a tight embrace, feeling the wings that were folded behind her back. When they pulled apart, Ana gave her a warm smile.

"Newlyn, you were amazing," she said. "You earned your wings when I was gone, I'm so proud of you."

"I'm a full-fledged seer!" the fairy replied, returning her smile. "The council wanted someone with more experience to heal your mind, but your father would hear none of it!"

Ana turned to her father then, walking to the place where he stood, taking the time to bow before she stepped forward to hug him. She tried her best to smile at him as genuinely as she had for Newlyn.

"My Raanana, how good it is to finally have you home," he said, his low voice carrying through the almost-empty temple. "We've been searching for you for so long. We searched every planet in this galaxy, and then the galaxies surrounding us. I wouldn't have believed if someone had told me right away that you were in another universe."

"No, I wouldn't have either, Father," she said quietly. "What Asmod was able to do was rather astonishing."

"Asmod?" her father asked. "You learned of its name?"

"Unfortunately."

"You had interactions with it?"

Ana quickly debated on how much she wanted the Temple Master to know right then. If there was one thing that her people took seriously, it was corruption of the soul by exposure to evil influences.

"Unwanted interactions, Father. But he's gone."

"Gone? By what means?"

She was silent for a few moments, hoping she could redirect her pious father's worries before she revealed too much to him. "He's dead, Father, I assure you. But I'm very, very tired, and - "

"Of course, what I am thinking, asking all these questions, my precious Raanana. Have Newlyn escort you to your room. We have a big celebration of your return tomorrow!"

Ana bit back the groan that was rising in her throat. She had hated all of the pompous festivities even before she had been human, and now she was looking forward to constant attention even less. All she wanted right then was to be alone.

She and the Temple Master lived in the apartments above the giant room where they currently were, having to keep watch over the cherished statues one of the many responsibilities her father was charged with. Newlyn accompanied her to the staircase that led them their private rooms, holding her hand the entire way. Had her friend not been so childlike and thrilled to have Ana back, she might have told her to fuck off. But she couldn't bring herself to do it.

Newlyn shrieked when a tall figure revealed itself from behind a pillar near the staircase. It was the scarlet haired fairy that Ana had taken an instant dislike to, and he was staring at them intently now.

"Raanana, I couldn't help but notice that you didn't request my presence," he said, his hands folded behind his back as he spoke.

"Valdis," Ana replied, trying her very best not to sound as pissed off as she felt that he had been waiting for them, "If I had wanted you here, I would have said so. Now leave." The two girls started up the stairs, and Valdis stayed at the bottom as he spoke, not daring to cross the threshold without blatant permission from her father.

"Is that any way to treat your betrothed?" he called after them.

"Go home, Valdis!" Ana yelled back. Newlyn stayed silent until they entered the lavish, golden rooms that Ana lived in. But once the door

closed, Ana heard her take a deep breath to indicate that she was summoning what little courage she could muster.

"What is it, Newlyn?" Ana asked, pinching the bridge of her nose in annoyance of it all. She had never been praised for her patience, and now she knew it was going to be one hundred times harder to be restrained after being human for so long.

"Forgive me, Lady Raanana - "

"Newlyn, what's with all the formalities?"

"Forgive me again, Raanana - "

"Call me Ana," she said curtly, cutting off her friend again.

Newlyn blinked in surprised at Ana's request. "But, that's so disrespectful!"

"Not if I want you to call me that," Ana said, doing her best to keep her demeanor calm. "I'm sorry, I keep interrupting. What is it?" she repeated. They were in a heavily decorated sitting room now, the room adorned with colorful plants and glittering tapestries. It made her miss the dinginess of Neibolt house.

"It's just, Valdis has been waiting patiently for you to return for so long. And it might do well for you to treat him with kindness after he went all that way to rescue you." She looked so sincere as she said it, and Ana had to cover her mouth when she started laughing.

"Newlyn, if you had seen the way he looked at me when he was 'rescuing' me, you wouldn't want to be kind to him either." Newlyn seemed to have a permanent look of surprise plastered on her glowing features. "Besides, you know I was never all that fond of him anyway."

Newlyn gasped, clapping a hand to her mouth. "Raanana, that's not something you just say!" She looked around the room as if expecting for someone who had been spying on them to reveal themselves.

"Maybe before," Ana muttered. "But I'm different now." She reached over to her friend, gently removing the hand that was covering her

mouth that was still hanging open in disbelief. "Newlyn, please. If I can't say these things to you, then there is no one that I can trust."

"Of course you can trust me!" she cried, throwing herself over to where Ana sat and circling her arms around her.

Ana patted the girl's head gently, feeling stiff under all of the sudden physical affection. "Then you'd better get used to me saying things you don't like hearing." Newlyn pulled away from her, nodding as she looked at her with worry. "Why didn't Valdis find someone else to marry, anyway?"

Her friend looked down at her hands sheepishly. "It was a was a topic of discussion. My mother even suggested him marrying me, but Valdis would have none of it."

Ana rolled her eyes. Her promise to marry the smug fairy was made between their respective parents only, after Valdis had requested to ask for her hand so many years ago. Her father had agreed only because he came from a prominent ancestry, and would be readily accepted by their clan to take over as Master of the Temple when her father died. But Ana had never really warmed to him, and had both consciously and subconsciously been self-sabotaging earning her wings to avoid actually marrying him.

Their particular race of fairies were born with several different kinds of gifts, including the clairvoyants like Newlyn who could manipulate minds, infiltrate dreams and sometimes predict futures. There were chlorokinetics, who could influence the plants and nature in the surrounding areas, the most powerful ones able to grow large trees in a matter of seconds. There were also talented healers, and ones that were more prone to mixing elixirs and casting spells. The classification that Ana and her mother fell under were the warriors, the least common kind and said to be descended from something other than fae. What limited Ana and the younger fairies of their natural talents was their people's practice of magically removing the infants' wings and powers, which would only be restored when they were older and had proven themselves worthy. They had to be deemed righteous, dedicated and disciplined enough to have them back, a decision that was made by the much older council members. Being Temple Master Seaghda's only child, that was something

expected of Ana to have achieved at a much younger age. But she had been rebellious as a child, and her desire to avoid marrying someone she despised didn't help her efforts.

Another reason for Ana's turbulent nature was the fact that female warriors would never be able to get their powers granted to them. When they earned their wings, that was all they received; the ability to fight what was deemed 'too effective' was something that was frowned upon for any fairy, let alone a female. Ana was merely working towards her wings so she would be seen as ready enough to marry and have offspring. It was something that she had always disagreed with, especially since their city was almost always the target of some other species or alien race that wanted to go to war. Their planet was home to a number of precious stones and plants, and others always wanted it.

Ana had been reprimanded when she had expressed her disagreements of these practices after her mother had died. She, too, had been a warrior stripped of her abilities at birth, and she had been killed during a battle after their enemy had managed to infiltrate the temple and find her there. Ana, the equivalent of a human preteen at the time, had been saved by their male warriors. It was something that she was always at the back of her mind, a reason to question the practices and decisions of the predominately male council that ruled over them all. Her father, the highest member on it, still did not see Ana's viewpoint even after his wife had died so helplessly. And part of her hated him for it.

"Why wouldn't Valdis agree to marrying you?" Ana asked, her thoughts pulled back to her loyal friend that was still by her side.

"He wants to be Temple Master someday. So he insisted on waiting for you to come back."

Ana snorted. "What a loving notion. I can't wait to be his wife."

Newlyn smiled slightly this time, and Ana was grateful for the genuine reaction from her. "Oh, Raanana. I'm just so happy to have you back after all this time." Ana nodded, looking around the room to avoid eye contact with her friend. "But you're not happy, are you?"

"No." She knew her friend was going to question why, and for the time being she couldn't even entertain the thought of talking about him with someone who would never, ever understand. "But it doesn't matter. I'm just exhausted."

"Go to sleep, my dear friend. You have a big day tomorrow."

"You should get some rest, too. It must have been tiring to give me back my memories."

"Oh, no, Raanana - " Newlyn stopped herself short. "Ana. I will sleep here, outside your room. In case you need me."

Ana told her to go home, but Newlyn insisted on staying. Ana would never admit to it, but she was grateful to know that someone she liked was just outside the door. She had hoped to fall asleep as soon as her head hit the pillow, but rest was delayed by the cascade of emotion that hit her once she was finally by herself. A very small, even minuscule part of her was glad to be home and among family. But the rest of her was devastated at the loss of Pennywise, and she missed him so much that it physically pained her. She cried for what seemed like hours, and when she finally did sleep, she dreamed of him.

She was awakened the next morning by a concerned looking Newlyn. "Ana, are okay?" she asked timidly as she gently shook her awake.

"Yes, I'm fine," Ana lied as she sat up in bed and ran a hand through her hair.

"You didn't sound fine. You were having a nightmare."

"I wasn't."

"Then what were you dreaming about?"

Ana shook her head, still unwilling to voice her loss out loud. She turned and looked out the window, willing herself not to cry. The sky was clear and blue, and a few singing birds flew by as if they cared nothing for her anguish.

"You were dreaming about him, weren't you?" Newlyn asked quietly.

Ana looked over at her in surprise, completely caught off guard by the question. Ana opened her mouth, intending to play dumb, but her friend had found a brand of boldness in the new day. "The Incubus, the Beast. You miss him, don't you?"

"Newlyn, how do you know about him?" Ana asked, completely dumbfounded.

"When I connected with your mind to retrieve your memories. I saw the ones from the other dimension. I don't know if it was all of them, but I saw enough."

"You can't say anything to anyone, Newlyn, you can't!"

"I won't, Ana. I promise you. But you have to be careful. Valdis said when they went to rescue you, his partner could see in the demon's mind that they had made a deal with, and she was incredibly envious about your relationship with the Incubus."

"So it's only a matter of time before my father finds out."

"Maybe not. We seers only divulge what we see when the council asks it of us."

"But Valdis already knows," Ana said, getting out of the bed. "He wouldn't hesitate to tell them if he wanted to get me into trouble."

"Why would he, Ana? He wants to marry you!"

Ana stopped for a second, contemplating Newlyn's words. She was right that it wouldn't be in her fiance's best interest to turn her over to the council for her relationship with the Eater of World's, especially if his goal was to become Temple Master. But she knew he wouldn't hesitate to use the knowledge to control her.

The two fairies started to get ready for the day. It would start with a quick breakfast and then mass at the temple, followed by the massive parade and feast that were being thrown in Lady Raanana's honor. Even with the impending chaos and the threat of Valdis looming over her, Ana got bathed and dressed with a newfound purpose. Even though the council would never restore her powerful gifts to her willingly, it didn't mean she would never get them back. Being the

Temple Master's daughter, she had detailed knowledge as to where the magical vials were kept, who protected them, how they worked. The only reason she had never dared even think about going to get them herself was because of her loyalty to her father, and her indoctrinated belief that one would never oppose their customs in such an audacious way. But Lady Raanana was no longer, and Ana, the lover of Pennywise, had taken her place. And she had one goal in mind: to get back to him.

***Author's Note**...I usually like to post one or two chapters on the weekends, but alas, I will be working 12 hours shifts this Friday through Sunday. So I'm hoping to update early next week. Thanks for reading! :)*

14. Chapter 14

Mass started promptly after breakfast, and Ana took her usual place behind her father on the altar. She never cared for having to be on display in front of everyone, especially because she found the chants and readings to be rather monotonous and had a hard time looking like she was invested in what was going on. Even as an adult she had been chided by the elders time and time again for letting her eyes wander about the room, and they took every opportunity to remind her that being Temple Master's Seaghda's daughter, she would someday serve as one of the spiritual leader's for their clan. Before going to Earth, she had taken these scoldings to heart, trying over and over to please her father and appear to be enthusiastic in their time of worship. But that had been quite some time ago, and praying to the new tortoise guardian named Muir that had taken Maturin's place was the furthest thing from her mind.

Within minutes of starting the mass, Ana's eyes were drifting across the room, and when they landed on the large statue of Maturin, she felt a curious mix of emotions run through her. She had been forcefully taken from Dulcis, and she had been in front of that statue, something that angered her and made her feel thankful at the same time. At that moment, she wondered how far she had strayed from her primary values. Here she was, in the presence of her father, her fiance, and the citizens that adored her without pause, and she could only think about the evil entity that was a universe away. But even in weighing her morals as the fairies around her knelt and raised their arms towards the sky, she loathed her former self for her ignorance and desperation to please everyone around her.

The assembled supplicants that faced the altar started to sing, and Ana scanned their many faces as some closed their eyes, even shed tears in their worship. She caught herself scrunching up her nose in revulsion, and quickly relaxed her face when she was aware of how she must look to anyone that had been watching her. She turned her head, locking eyes with Valdis, who was on the opposite side of the altar behind her father. His emerald eyes were wide with astonishment, and in response, she raised an eyebrow, as if to dare him to do anything about it.

When the session was done and the temple started to empty, Ana once again turned her attention towards Maturin's statue. Three male fairies, all of them dressed in the same common white robes, all of them sporting their wings, were approaching it. As Ana's father came up to her and placed a gentle hand on her shoulder, she noticed one kneeling, but not as if to pray. It was almost as if he were studying it.

"Father, what are they doing?" she asked, placing her hand over his to acknowledge his gesture.

"They are researching the pathway," he replied serenely, and she turned to face him.

"Why?"

"They are the ones that discovered a way to open it. Now that it is, they want to ensure that they can open it again once it is closed. It took a lot of time and effort to do it initially, or we would have come to you sooner."

"But you wouldn't have come to me at all if it hadn't been for Lamia," Ana replied, aiming to learn more about the deal they had made with the blonde entity.

"My precious daughter, that is true. I am forever indebted to her for the information she provided."

Ana felt her blood begin to boil as she heard her father speak of Lamia so fondly. "No, you aren't. The last thing she deserves is your praise and appreciation."

Seagdha looked bewildered at Ana's words. "Of course she does. Without her involvement, you would still be in the clutches of the Incubus."

Ana looked away from him then, biting her tongue as she fought the urge to chastise her father, tell him how wrong he was, scream that all she wanted was to get back to the very being that their people had been taught to fear. But she couldn't, she had to make sure no one was suspecting her intentions to go back as soon as she found an opportunity.

"Father, what did you give her as payment?" she asked, and she instantly sensed Seaghda's tension as the question. No doubt she was pushing her luck, asking this many questions. It was frowned upon for females to inquire so much, even if she was his daughter.

"The topic shall rest until another time, my Raanana. Your celebration is to start soon, and we wouldn't want you to be late for it!" he started to usher her towards the front doors of the temple, and she partially complied, starting to walk with him.

"But Father, you have to understand. She was already dangerous before you gave her whatever was in that vial, and she's the very definition of evil!" she persisted.

"The very definition of evil is the Incubus, and if agreeing to an arrangement with one of lesser malevolence is what it took to get you away from it, then I will not regret the decision," he replied sternly, a tone Ana was all too familiar with hearing. "Raanana, you are making me worried for your acumen."

She wanted to argue further, the defiance building up in her and readying to explode, especially having grown quite used to fighting as of recently. But she was able to keep it inside just then. "You're right, Father. I don't know what's come over me."

They were standing in front of the doors then, and Ana could hear the roar of thousands of cheering clan members outside, eager to catch a glimpse of their Lady Raanana if they hadn't gotten the opportunity to attend the mass. Seaghda faced his daughter, taking her hands in his as he searched her eyes. "We will have this celebration, and when it is finished, we will discuss this more if that's what you wish. I've been so enveloped in getting you back, that now that I have, I fear I will lose sight of what you went through."

"Yes, Father," Ana conceded, giving him a small bow. The gesture felt asinine now, even though she had done it a countless number of times in her life. But right now, she needed to keep the peace.

The doors opened then, and the cheering became deafening without the thick barriers in place. Ana forced a smile on her face and started to wave at the crowd, her father doing the same. She flinched slightly

when she felt something on the top of her head, and she turned to see that Valdis was standing behind her, going to place a crown of pink and yellow flowers on her head. When the wreath was in place, Valdis stepped in front of her, then took her hand in his and bent forward to give it a chaste kiss. The noise from the fairies grew louder, and Ana was feeling more and more like she was in a stage production, playing a part that she knew the lines to but didn't feel connected with.

The betrothed couple stood hand in hand as Temple Master Seaghda addressed the crowd in a booming voice, something about Raanana's safe return and what it meant for the future of the clan, but Ana wasn't really paying attention to what was being said. As she took in the blue, cloudless sky and the dense green forests that grew beyond the outskirts of the picturesque city, she wondered if this was near the place where Pennywise had come ashore billions of years ago to heal and hide after becoming so ill.

Valdis helped her mount the six-legged animal that resembled a large horse, and the parade started. Ana tried to appear to be engaged with the excited on lookers as they made their way down the road, keeping that fake smile plastered on and keeping her arm moving like the obedient daughter she was trying to pass off as. But the initial thought of Pennywise kept a never ending cycle of memories of him going through her mind, and by the end of processional, she was nearly in tears. She missed his voice, his smell, his touch. She missed the pleasant hum that ran through every cell of her body when he was near. She was even missing their constant bickering.

When they reached the white sandy beach where the feast was about to take place, Valdis dismounted and came to stand by Ana's animal, but before he could reach up to place his hands on her to assist her down, she had hastily jumped to the ground by herself. She stumbled a bit, but she caught herself.

"My love, I see that grace has not fully returned to you," Valdis quipped, attempting to come off like he was teasing her, but Ana sensed the repugnance in his demeanor.

"And I see that cordiality has still never bothered to make acquaintance with you," she replied swiftly, stalking off towards the

table where they were to be seated. She saw Newlyn already sitting next to Ana's seat, and she breathed a sigh of relief.

"Let me escort you, miserable woman," Valdis muttered as he matched her stride easily with his long legs. He wrapped an arm around her shoulders, and Ana tried to shrug it off, his touch feeling revolting to her and making her yearn for Pennywise even more. "What has gotten into you?"

Ana stopped struggling to get his arm off of her when she noticed her father and other council members eyeing the couple warily. "I don't think you could fathom what has gotten into me," she hissed back, her voice barely a whisper as to not attract too much attention. Valdis stopped walking, keeping his arm firmly around her. Valdis looked to the table where Master Seaghda was clearly waiting for them, and the red-haired fairy flashed him a charming smile.

"I just need a moment of privacy with my future bride," he called to him reassuringly. He snapped his fingers then, and one of the seers whose job it was to merely stand around and wait for someone to order him around came rushing forward. "A veil of silence, if you would," Valdis commanded, and the seer raised his hands, creating a swirling vortex around Valdis and Ana. It was soundproof, but still transparent, so two of them could talk with some secrecy but still be watched, as to not tempt anyone into engaging in anything carnal. "Why the aggressive disposition, Raanana?"

"Aggressive?" she repeated bitterly. "How is attempting to maintain personal space aggressive?"

Fabricated joy still adorned his face as he looked down at her. "I am your intended. You no longer enjoy the notion of 'personal space', as it belongs to me," he retorted, and Ana resisted the urge to slap him, knowing it bring them more attention than she wanted at the moment.

"Funny, you'd think we were married already, Valdis. Fortunately for me, we are not."

"Does that please you?" he asked, smiling as his eyes bore down at her with a wild glint. "Does it bring you happiness knowing we were

to be married and have children eons ago?"

She debated for a few seconds, wondering how far she should be taking this, knowing there might be tremendous repercussions. But the idea of marrying this self-centered man made Ana want to vomit, and imagining anyone else but Pennywise claiming her made it so much worse. "It does, Valdis. In fact, what might bring me even more happiness is if we decided to part ways now, instead of continuing this facade."

"You don't mean that!" he said haughtily.

"I do."

"Raanana," he said, grabbing her wrist suddenly, then sliding his hand down to her hand when he realized that seizing her might draw negative attention. "Even if what you're saying is true, you can't make that decision."

"I can appeal to my father. Even with all his traditions, I'd like to believe that he still wants me to be happy." She tried to pull her hand out of his, but he gripped it to the point that it was causing her pain.

"You won't."

"Really? What makes you think that?" she countered, her human self; no, her *true* self surging forward as they argued. If she had had a blade in her hand, she might have impaled it with him right then.

"Because then I will tell Temple Master Seaghda what I learned when I was retrieving you. That you had some sort of rapport with the Beast." He had voiced it, the threat that Ana anticipated coming at some point, but she had thought he might wait to use it when they were already married to enforce some control over her.

"Would you, Valdis? Because I have reason to believe that wouldn't want to be openly associated with someone with that sort of sin. It would make becoming Temple Master rather difficult down the road, especially without having me as your wife."

"Maybe. Or maybe I'd be hailed as a hero, turning you in. The council might commend me for that, giving up my love to do what's right in

the name of Muir." Ana glared at him, and he finally let go of her hand to rustle for something in his robe pocket. "But I agree with you, dear Raanana, that it would be much, much easier for me to become Temple Master with you as my bride, and our souls to appear to be free from evil influence. And I know that you want to avoid being imprisoned for your wrongdoings. So why don't we just agree to get along?"

She wanted to strike out, to curse him, to flee. But she knew it would be her undoing. If she were arrested, it would be even more difficult to find a way back to Pennywise. So she decided to play along for the time being, keeping her freedom in order to find a way. "Fine," she said quietly, and this time, Valdis flashed her a genuine smile. He held out a golden necklace for her, a dainty chain with a large golden tortoise hanging from it, it's green eyes shining back at her mockingly.

"Then apologize," Valdis drawled. Ana was shaking with rage at this point. She swallowed down her native language's equivalent to 'fuck you' before speaking.

"I apologize sincerely, Valdis. Please forgive me for my slights."

At her words, Valdis motioned at the seer who was waiting for them, and the veil was quickly lifted. Valdis turned his attention back to the necklace he was brandishing at her.

"I had your betrothal piece redone with the image of Muir after Maturin's passing," he said loudly, intending for the surrounding crowd to hear him. All eyes were on them now, and Ana was fighting back tears of indignation and frustration. "It would make me immensely fortuitous if you accepted it, my love."

She nodded, hoping to get this public formality out of the way. The fae around her clapped and shouted happily as Valdis placed the necklace on her and planted a kiss on the top of her head. As they headed towards the table they were originally headed for, Ana saw that Seaghda was watching them intently, looking content as they walked towards him hand in hand once again. It made Ana hate him.

To Ana, the feast seemed to take forever. There were local fruits and

vegetables of every color covering the table, much more than what could be consumed by the party-goers at that time. Their clan was known for being vegetarians, the harming and consumption of animals a grievous offense. There was singing, and choreographed dancing, and well-wishers speaking to Ana and her father constantly. Only when the two nearby stars that provided light to the planet started to set did Newlyn finally manage to pull her away, claiming they needed private time to solidify their bond.

"You're miserable," Newlyn mused quietly as they walked on the beach together.

"Yes," Ana confirmed, and she wiped a tear that was rolling down her glowing face.

"What can I do to help?" her pink-haired friend inquired.

"Nothing," Ana replied.

"But what is your plan?"

Ana stopped walking, turning to face her friend and study her face. "Newlyn, what are you talking about?"

"Don't play coy with me, Lady Raanana," Newlyn said, giving her friend a frown. "I'm a full seer now. I might not be reading your mind directly, but I can pick up on bits and pieces without even trying. You have no plans to stay here, do you?"

Ana took a deep breath before replying. "Not if I have my way." She told her friend of wanting to use the open portal to go back, but that it would be tricky to get to it without being confronted. Her next step, which sounded ludicrous even saying it out loud, made Newlyn gasp.

"Ana, you can't possibly think it's going to work!"

"Newlyn, all I have to do is get past the guard and go in. No one will be expecting me to even consider doing it."

"And find your vial. And use it before you get caught, and then not get arrested - "

"They'll have a hard time arresting me once I get my abilities," Ana said confidently.

"Non-warriors, maybe. But Ana, what happens when you come across warriors that have been training and fighting their whole adult lives?"

Ana shook her head, looking up the darkening sky as if it were going to give her answers. "It doesn't matter. I have to try, Newlyn."

Newlyn hugged her friend tightly. "Wouldn't it be easier to just let the time pass, let your heart heal? You could be happy here again."

"No, I couldn't," Ana replied. "I love him so much, Newlyn. The longer we're apart, the more it hurts me. And wondering what he's feeling right now makes me crazy with worry."

Finally convinced to help Ana get her powers that had been stolen from her at birth, Newlyn flew them to the revered cave that had been hallowed out centuries ago for the safekeeping of the fairy's gifts. It was far beyond the city, across many acres of forest and difficult to find if traveling there by foot. Ana prayed to whoever that would listen that it would be some random, incompetent guard that would be there.

They landed in the forest, quietly approaching the single entrance and trying not to be noticed. Ana's heart sank when she saw the tall, muscular warrior that was planted in front of it, his class obvious by the golden, winged helmet that was on his head. The women didn't even have to discuss it, knowing that it would be a lost cause to try to get in unnoticed, and headed back towards the festivities.

"My Raanana, there you are," her father greeted warmly when they returned to the table. "I was beginning to worry that you'd gone home."

Ana wanted to tell him that she was very much over the celebration and wanted nothing more than to go home and be alone. But she didn't feel like having the argument just then, knowing it would just upset him. She had stayed quiet about many things that displeased her over the years, for fear of unfair judgment and discipline.

"I was with Newlyn, Father. We just wanted some quiet time," she said. Seaghda nodded, and then was called away by another white-haired council member to participate in a dance. Newlyn stood at her side silently, allowing Ana to have a moment of peace.

It was interrupted swiftly by the appearance of Valdis. Ana chose not to look at him or acknowledge his presence right away.

"Your flowers are gone," he pointed out quietly, and Ana reached up to feel that the crown she had been wearing was long gone, probably lost when she had been in the sky with Newlyn. "Not just walking down the beach, were you?"

"Leave me alone," she muttered quietly.

"No, my love. You are going to join me in a dance, so we can pretend to be the happy couple they think we are," he said, grabbing her upper arm. Newlyn jumped forward to intervene, but Ana shook her head, willing her not to get caught up in this mess.

"I'll do it," Ana said to Valdis, looking up at him defiantly. "But only if you tell me what was in the vial you gave Lamia."

Valdis shook his head is disbelief.

"Raanana, what does it matter?"

"Just tell me!" she shouted, and eyes were on them again. Valdis smiled at them sheepishly, letting go of her arm.

"Come on," he said, gesturing for her to follow him to where the musicians were playing and fairies were hopping and dancing on the beach. Ana complied, folding her arms over her chest so he couldn't grasp her hand. "It was an ability enrichment. That's all."

"So no new powers?" Ana questioned.

"No. Just giving more capacity to the ones she already possessed. Why do you care?"

She couldn't tell him that her mind was consumed with Pennywise, that she worried for his safety above all else, and that she had wished

Lamia dead from almost the moment they had met. She didn't want to give him more to go to the council with if he chose to do so.

"Why do *you* care?" she retorted childishly, a tactic she had learned from her clown lover, knowing it would aggravate Valdis. He finally caved to his annoyance, his smile completely gone as he glared at her. He opened his mouth to respond, when they suddenly heard screaming spread across the beach. Fairies were looking up the the dark sky with fear etched across their faces, and when Ana followed suit, she saw three impossibly large, glowing orange lights above them. They didn't seem to be close, possibly still hovering outside of Dulcis' atmosphere.

"The Incubus!" Ana heard someone screech, causing more screaming. Ana closed her eyes, the delicious tingle spreading through her like warm honey. She reached her arms towards the sky even as fairies started to run. It was no surprise that the fairies were frightened to the point of fleeing; none of them were alive when Pennywise had come to Dulcis so long ago and killed some of them, but the legend was ever present in their cultural teachings, his known capacity for evil preceding him. To them, Pennywise was equivalent to humanity's Satan.

It was the most she had felt at peace since arriving to Dulcis, and only when she felt a hand grip her shoulder did she finally open her eyes. The glow from the deadlights was so immense that it was reaching the beach around her. Even as she bathed in the orange light and her heart hummed in response, she silently begged for him not to cross into the planet's atmosphere.

"Newlyn, I'm not leaving," Ana started, and her friend shook her head.

"I can feel your draw to it. Let me connect you!" Newlyn cried above the screaming, and before Ana could respond, she felt her hands on her temples.

It felt like she was being ripped from her body. Before she could even process the pain, she found herself surrounded in a black, never ending darkness. Part of her wondered if she had died, but when she saw a figure taking shape before her, all morbid thoughts left her in

an instant. Pennywise materialized in a matter of seconds, and Ana flung herself forward into his arms.

"Penny!" she cried, tears flowing freely from her eyes. He squeezed her back just as hard, but he let out a grunt, looking around the blackness in utter confusion. At first, Ana wondered if he was being drawn in too much by her fairy body and that he might try to kill her, but when she pulled away from him and looked down at her hand, it looked surprisingly human.

"How am I human again?" she asked, and Pennywise reached forward, placing a gloved hand on her cheek.

"This is just a mirage, sweet girl," he replied. "I don't travel the cosmos in clown form."

"Oh," Ana said with disappointment. "So you're still floating above the beach?"

Pennywise nodded. "And you're passed out on the sand, looking incredibly delicious, I might add." He gave her a sly smile, and she felt like she hadn't seen him in forever, studying his face like she'd never see it again.

"Newlyn's a seer," Ana explained. "And a pretty powerful one, it seems like. She gave me my old memories back, and connected our minds just now."

"Then I'll spare her," Pennywise growled, his teeth growing in number as he spoke.

"What? Penny, no, you can't kill any of them!"

"You get your memories back, and suddenly you're all protective, eh?" he said in his gravelly voice.

Ana starting laughing. "No, Penny, no. Newlyn is the only one I give a shit about. The rest can go fuck themselves. I just don't need you getting sick."

"I'll be careful not to eat any of them."

"No, Penny! You said yourself you wouldn't be able to resist. We have many powerful fairies now, it's a lot different than it was when you were here. And even if you did manage not to eat anyone, I won't survive flying through universes. You *can't* come down here, Penny, I won't let you - " she was growing desperate in her attempts to convince him, her voice cracking as she spoke, tears falling freely from her eyes. She was silenced by Pennywise's red lips on hers, and only when she calmed a bit did he pull away.

"I won't come down," he said finally, his golden eyes staring into her soul.

"I'll find a way back to you," she said firmly. "I'm already working on it. It's all I care about, Penny. I love you."

"Love you, too," he replied, giving her another kiss. They held each other for a few silent moments.

"I was worried Lamia would make you forget about me," she whispered. "The fairies gave her a way to improve her powers, and she already manipulates minds."

"Pennywise wouldn't forget about you," the clown replied, his arms wrapping around her small frame even more tightly.

There was a disturbance in their peace then. Ana felt it, like a minor earthquake shuddering all around them, and then she looked around Pennywise's tall frame to see Lamia standing there. Ana, although discouraged by the appearance of the blonde entity in their solitary space, gasped in delight at her current state; she was missing an eye, the socket empty and red, and one of her arms was also gone.

"She's here, Penny," Ana whispered. "I have a feeling she's going to disconnect us. But I have to know, did you attack her?"

"Yes I did! When I found out what she did to you," Pennywise said with a laugh, and Ana was thrilled not only by Lamia's mutilation, but also that Pennywise had been able to resist her mental influence for a time.

"He stopped feeding because of you! Because he's so depressed!" came

Lamia's shrill, angry voice. "I'm the only reason he's still alive!" She was standing right beside them now.

"You keep telling yourself that, you insane bitch," Ana said. "But I'd skip town if I were you. Because if I come back and you're still there - " Lamia suddenly reached out to touch both of them.

Ana felt herself being sucked backwards, and she knew she was going back to her fairy self that was lying motionless on the ground. When she regained her composure and pushed herself up from the sand, she looked up to see the deadlights above her one last time, hovering as though they were watching her. She smiled at the glow, knowing that the love between her and Pennywise was as strong as ever.

The fairies that had remained on the beach were still scattering and shrieking, and she rolled her eyes. Newlyn and Valdis were at her side, and when Ana smiled up at her friend, Newlyn returned the smile enthusiastically. Valdis, on the other hand, looked like a strange mix between crazed and livid.

Ana couldn't possibly worry about her fiance's infuriated assumptions just then. Instead, her thoughts were filled with destroying one-eyed, pathetic looking Lamia, and it made her laugh.

15. Chapter 15

Agreeing not to go down to the beach and kill every last one of those pitiful, sparkling creatures was not something that Pennywise would consider to be in his nature. To say he was angry about his sweet girl being there against both of their wills was a gross understatement. He had rushed through the Macroverse and into the dimension that was home to Dulcis after not being able to stand being apart from her any longer, fully intending to butcher every fairy within the vicinity of the party. Envisioning the bloodshed as he traveled through space was rather delightful, and even though the last time he had tasted pure fairy flesh had been billions of years ago, the memory of it made him positively ravenous.

But even so, Ana had managed to convince him not to go through with it. He would never openly admit it to her, but she was definitely being the logical of the two when their minds were connected; he could tell himself all he wanted that he could kill those winged creatures without consuming any of them, but even being near the planet was enticing. She was also right in reminding him that he would grow gravely ill if he gave into his monstrous appetite, as the last time he did, he was incapacitated for thousands of years before he healed enough to finally leave. That would not do, for she could not be with him if he was slumbering for that long.

After their minds were torn away from one another, he spent precious moments watching Ana on the beach, finally pulling himself away as to not be seduced by the tantalizing scents any longer. He started his return journey to Earth, knowing that if Ana was somehow able to return, he had to be there waiting for her.

While he floated through the darkness in the form of a trio of lights, he reminisced that Ana had also been able to convince him not to follow her to Dulcis when she was initially taken from him. He had been a desperate, raging mess of emotions as she hurtled through the portal and he chased after her. The idea that a mere girl could change his mind so easily and on more than one occasion was troubling, until he reminded himself of all the sappy lessons the movies they had watched together had told him: love changes you. He wasn't sure

if that was what was going on, as the concept of love was still a bit lost on him, but he entertained that it was a possibility.

His musings were interrupted when he sensed another entity nearby. Had he had a mouth in his current form, he would have growled in annoyance, as Lamia was following him yet again, her essence much smaller and duller than his own. Thoughts of Ana were quickly replaced by his anger for the young entity, and had he been more able to be recognize that interfering with his introspection about his lover may have been Lamia's goal just then, he would have resisted it. But all that consumed now was his rage, and he went after her, lights chasing lights through the dark void.

Just as he was about to reach her, intending to snuff her meager life force out of existence, he suddenly stopped chase. His consciousness grew muddled for a short time, and then he was continuing on his path back to Earth, thoughts of desiring Ana forming again. The Eater of Worlds barely noticed the disturbance, a pattern that had been repeated time and time again when Lamia had been successful in manipulating him.

Being ignorant to her influences, especially now that she had been able to increase her ability to do so, Pennywise was unaware how weary she was growing, having to stave him off repeatedly from killing her. Her confidence had been greatly shaken when he had attacked her after learning of her involvement in Ana's disappearance, and a few times she began to question her willingness to continue deceiving the cosmic being that she admired so much. It had taken a lot of effort on her part to derail his intent to kill her, even as he was ripping off her limb and gouging her eye out of its socket with a claw. He even went out of his way a few times to cruelly mock her for her missing body parts, sarcastically asking what had happened to her and laughing when she obediently told him it was he who had done it. But she pressed on with the charade, her longing to be with him ultimately overshadowing her fear of death.

Lamia had tried and failed many times to reach into his mind and erase all traces of Ana. But she learned that their bond was incredibly strong, something that devastated her to no end. She had come to the conclusion that the only reason she was able to keep Pennywise from killing her, but not force him to forget his fondness for Ana, was that

the two endeavors were on completely different levels. He adored Ana; he barely noticed Lamia except for the few times she had impressed him early on. As of late she felt like he thought of her as nothing more than a bothersome nuisance, like a housefly he wanted to swat. She followed behind him carefully for the remainder of their journey to Earth, not wanting to start another life or death pursuit.

Pennywise immediately went back to Neibolt house as soon as he was back in Derry, a small hope dancing around in his mind that Ana would somehow already be there to greet him. But he knew it was a naive expectation, and after wandering about the empty house did nothing but discourage him, he went down to the sewers.

He needed to feed. But he had little ambition to hunt at the moment, and after a few hours of wandering about his lair, he ended up sitting cross legged in his circus wagon, nothing to occupy his mind except for the fact that his sweet girl was not near him.

"Dominus, you need to eat," came Lamia's voice from somewhere in the sewers nearby. Pennywise didn't bother to look up at her.

"I'll eat when I want to eat," he grumbled, his gloved hands folded in his lap, his golden eyes staring down at them.

"You'll grow weak," the blonde continued, approaching the wagon apprehensively. The clown still didn't look at her, and she clicked her tongue in disapproval. "You haven't eaten since before the fairy went home, it's been nearly a week. At least let me hunt for you."

"You try my patience, girl," Pennywise growled, and Lamia flinched at the threatening noise emitting from his throat. He had been occupied with comparing how much time had passed on Earth as compared to Dulcis, and he was wondering how many more nights of loneliness and agony he had gone through than Ana had at this point.

Lamia was right in front of him now, starting to squat down to meet his eye level. "Master, please let me help you! It pains me to see you in this state. Remember how promising our partnership seemed in the beginning? We can still have that, I will give you everything if you just let me!"

She shrieked as Pennywise's hand shot out and grabbed her wrist, and his glowing eyes were staring at her finally. "Maybe Pennywise should remove your remaining arm? Wouldn't that be a funny thing to see!"

"Dominus, no, please!" Even with the vial of magic given to her from the fairies, Lamia was no physical match for the ancient entity, and as his teeth began to morph and multiply, she struggled to free herself from his grip.

Suddenly, Pennywise sensed something familiar enter his domain. His assault on the blonde entity was cut short, as his attention was swiftly directed elsewhere. He didn't notice Lamia gasping in relief when he let go of her, or as she scuttled away from the wagon.

"My friends have come for a visit!" he exclaimed, standing up with little effort. It was humorous to him, that he had been so distracted by the recent events that he had almost forgotten about Mike and Bill coming back to Derry to see him, and now they had dared to enter the house once again. At least in his anguish, he could have some entertainment for the time being.

"Master, do you need my help?" Lamia asked, but Pennywise ignored her completely, going up to greet the two Losers. To his utter delight, Mike and Bill had also convinced Richie to join them. He learned soon after watching the group that Beverly and Ben were apprehensive about returning, and they had not succeeded in persuading them. Pennywise would have to remedy the situation if need be.

So he played with his friends. The vast majority of the day was spent terrorizing them in the house, like he had done with them in the past. The Losers were looking much older, their skin sporting more wrinkles than when he had last seen them ten years ago. It reminded him of the their mortality and impending, unavoidable deaths. As he transformed into Georgie yet again to torture Bill, he wondered if any of them would live long enough to play again in another twenty-seven years, assuming he wouldn't be woken prematurely.

He decided to kill one of them soon after this realization, knowing this was potentially end game and not wanting to miss the chance. It

was immensely satisfying smashing Richie's head in with an overgrown fist, his companions screaming as his brain tissue spattered on their clothing and faces. He planned next to kill Mike, but he waited until the next day when he and Bill were attempting to regroup and organize whatever pathetic little ritual they were going to try this time. Mike's death was much more cruel, Pennywise's usual jealousy for the man coursing through him as he attacked him, taking his time to tear at his flesh again and again before finally delivering the killing blow.

His precious girl had still not returned to him the next day, and even having his friends here for playtime wasn't fully occupying him now. He found himself wondering if Ana would disapprove of his current course of action, but reminded himself that they were *his* friends, and that it wasn't really up to her. Thinking of his miserable situation again, he changed his mind on what to do with Bill. Pennywise had let him leave Derry safely, only because he was planning to follow him to where he lived in New York and possibly kill one of his loved ones in front of him. Catching him completely off guard like that seemed like a wonderful idea at the time. But now that he was preoccupied with missing Ana once again, he came up with a new plan.

He would go to visit Ben and Beverly, assuming that Ana didn't come back in the next day or so. He would kill only one of them, his rationale being that if *he* had to be alone and longing for his mate, that whoever he let live would have to suffer the same fate. It appeased his agony a little just thinking about it. But only a little.

16. Chapter 16

Ana's feelings of soaring hope were quickly dashed once her consciousness had been reunited with her body. Valdis, ever the master of buzzkill, was now ferociously questioning Ana as she grabbed Newlyn's hand and started to head back towards the temple. Some of the fairies were still scurrying about in a panic, while others were so surprised to see their Lady Raanana being aggressively pursued by her betrothed that they dared to stop and gawk at them.

"What in the name of Maturin *was that?*" he seethed at her as he followed them closely, his green eyes bugging out, his normal attempt at appearing calm and collected long lost.

"You know what that was," Ana answered curtly, pulling Newlyn closer to her as they attempted to increase their pace, as if that would lose the erratic fairy.

"Raanana, I know without a doubt that it was the vile creature, but what on earth were *you* doing looking like you idolized it? Like you were overjoyed in its presence?"

"I don't recall any of that, Valdis. In fact, what I vaguely remember was lying blacked out on the sand," Ana replied coolly, and Valdis ran a few steps to gain ground on the two girls, successful in getting in front of them and stopping them from going any further. "Get out of my way, Valdis."

"I will not!" Valdis cried, and he reached out to seize Ana's arms roughly. Newlyn started to protest, but Valdis let go of Ana just long enough to slap her in the face, making her cry out and stagger on her feet. "I will not allow such disobedience, and as your fiance - !"

Ana, whose arms were in the strong grasp of the much larger, angered body in front of her, used one of her free limbs kick its shin. This time, it was Valdis who cried out in pain, and as soon as he let go of her, Ana reached out to put her arm around Newlyn's shoulders and keep her moving towards the temple. Valdis, resolved to get answers, continued his pursuit.

The three of them reached the staircase that led to the main doors, and Ana turned on her heel to face him before he could pounce on them again. "You will not cross this threshold, Valdis! I wish to be alone with Newlyn."

Valdis raised his hand as if to strike her this time, but a loud, booming voice fell on the trio, instantly interrupting his intended assault.

"You will not lay a hand on my daughter!" Seaghda's baritone timber commanded, and Valdis appeared to shrink as he realized his act of abuse had been witnessed by his future father-in-law. The temple master approached them, a stern look adorning his features, his white hair looking uncharacteristically disheveled.

"Master Seaghda, forgive me," Valdis sniveled with a bow, "My zeal for an explanation of tonight's actions overtook me."

"Young Valdis, I do believe that all of us are disquieted and wanting reassurance that the Incubus will not cause our clan harm. But there is no justification for violence," Seaghda replied calmly. "Return home now, Valdis." He gestured for the girls to go into the temple, and Ana didn't wait for him to have to tell them again, wanting to go somewhere private and away from her hysterical fiance.

"I'm so sorry, Newlyn," Ana said remorsefully to her friend, who was gently cupping her reddened cheek as they walked.

"Don't apologize, Ana," Newlyn replied quietly. "Everyone is understandably upset by all of this."

They started up the stairs towards her golden apartments, and Ana was a bit leery that her father had not yet come through the main doors into the temple. She hoped Valdis wasn't busy trying to persuade the temple master of something that would not be in her favor, but she knew it was a likely possibility. Once they were in the sitting room with the doors closed and Newlyn was seated comfortably, Ana started to pace the room.

"Ana, please, you need to rest," Newlyn said, and Ana shook her head.

"No. No rest. I need to try to get out of here tonight."

Newlyn audibly gasped. "Ana, there's no way - "

"But this will be the best time. Everyone's panicking, not organized, and I might be able to slip by unnoticed," Ana muttered, wringing her hands as she continued to pace. The two argued for some time, Newlyn feeling protective of her friend and not wanting to do anything stupid, Ana not wanting to hear anything rational. Once Ana figuratively put her foot down on the matter, telling Newlyn that she was going to try to get into the cave whether she helped her or not, she went into one of her father's many studies to fetch a large silver blade that was kept as a relic. It was a grievous offense to take the weapon from its pedestal with intention to use it against one of her own kind, but Ana was far from caring about following her people's customs now.

"Ana, that is a grave sin," Newlyn said ominously as she watched Ana tuck it into her robes. "You'll be lucky if you live through the night, by the grace of Muir!"

Ana rolled her blue eyes as she straightened her robes. "If it was the tortoise's goal to strike me down for my sins, he would have done it a lot sooner."

Newlyn sighed, shaking her head at her blue-haired friend's response. "You've changed so much, my Lady Raanana."

Ana gave her a half-smile, her first instinct to be rude to her pious friend, but holding herself back out of affection. "For the better, I hope."

Newlyn was about to respond, when they heard the creaking that indicated the front doors were opening. Ana patted herself down quickly, double checking that the ancient artifact wasn't noticeable through the white material. Her father came through first, a solemn expression on his features as he came towards them. Ana opened her mouth to greet him, but the welcome died in her throat when she saw guard after guard cross into her home after him.

"Father," Ana said as she bowed, hoping not to sound as alarmed as

she felt just then, "What is happening?"

Seaghda walked past her, going to stand in front of the pink-haired fairy, who had sprang to her feet and gone into a deep bow as soon as he had entered. "Newlyn, Seer of the Maturin Temple, it is my duty to inform you that you are under arrest." At his words, two of the guards sprang forward, immediately pulling Newlyn's hands behind her back and binding them with golden shackles, their much larger hands placed on her shoulders to keep her in line once she was bound. There was no need for such restraint, as devout Newlyn would never think to resist her detainment.

"Father!" Ana gasped, rushing forward to aid her friend, but she was stopped short by the two guards that weren't manhandling the seer. "What is the meaning of this? She's done nothing wrong!"

At her statement, the flame-haired fairy she had come to entirely loath stepped into the room, a smug look on his face.

"Valdis informs me otherwise," Seaghda replied quietly, gesturing to Ana's fiance.

"Informed you of what?" Ana seethed, and she wondered how far she would get if she surprised the whole room and stabbed Valdis right then, imagining how satisfying it would be to feel the silver blade slide into his flesh like butter. But Pennywise was always in the back of her mind, and she couldn't make the situation harder. She had to get back to him. "What could she have done that's so deplorable that you would do this?"

"Raanana, hold your tongue. You know these matters are left to the council," her father said, his patience suddenly gone as his daughter challenged him, a behavior that was punishable in their culture. Ana kept quiet then, knowing her badgering would only make the situation much worse. So she apologized yet again to her friend as they took her away, refusing to let tears fall with all of the males in the room, not wanting them to see how fragile she felt. Her father and the guards left with Newlyn to take her to the council for questioning, and Ana found herself alone with Valdis.

"Such a pity," he said, shaking his head somberly, although Ana knew

it was put on. "Newlyn is such a righteous seer, to see her fall into such immorality is heart-breaking."

"You shouldn't be in here without my father's blessing," Ana replied through gritted teeth. Her urge to slice him was becoming even more unbearable.

"Oh, I think he's rather preoccupied right now," Valdis said, taking a few confident steps towards her. "Much more important things to figure out." Ana stood her ground, refusing to back up as he got closer to her, his emerald eyes shining at her mischievously.

"What did you tell him, Valdis?"

"That she had something to do with you and the Incubus communicating," he said nonchalantly.

"That's a heavy accusation, and you have no proof!"

"Oh, I don't believe it's far off, dear fiance," Valdis replied. "You see, those lights seemed quite still at the same time you fainted on the beach, and those things only took place after she touched you."

"You speak of things you know nothing about," Ana hissed. She was clenching and unclenching her right hand, fighting the desire to pull out the blade.

"Maybe, maybe not," Valdis said, smirking as he looked down his nose at her. "But we'll know when we have the elder seers look into her mind."

"And then what, Valdis?" Ana asked haughtily, taking a step forward, communicating to him that she wasn't going to be intimidated. "What is the end goal to this? I thought when we spoke earlier, we agreed that it would be easier for you to become Temple Master if we left all of this alone."

"That was until I saw your reaction to the Beast. How euphoric you looked, and everyone saw. I'm afraid I feel the need to enforce a bit more authority over you if this marriage is going to work, Raanana."

"So this is you blackmailing me further? Keeping Newlyn in a cage so

I'll behave?"

"You'll find I have a large amount of influence with the council. Her punishments may need my input."

Ana took a deep breath, attempting to steady her rage. "You have no idea what you've done, Valdis." She knew that if the council succeeded in seeing into Newlyn's mind, then they would see all of Ana's memories from Earth. And then they would come after her.

Valdis seemed to ignore her. "But I can make this all better, my dear. I can make this all go away, as long as you adhere to what I want from you."

Ana sneered at him, feeling absolutely venomous. She didn't need to ask him what he wanted from her; she knew her whole life what the male members of their city wanted from their females. Absolute, undisputed submission, to appear to be the perfect wife, to bear offspring to assert their political positions. He wanted her to keep her mouth shut, attend masses daily, obey his wishes without question. He didn't care what she may or may not have done with the Incubus, as long as no one else knew and she appeared to be pure and worthy enough to continue being the direct route to eventually becoming Temple Master. What he wasn't comprehending was that soon, the entire council would know of her life with the Eater of Worlds, and there was no way any of them would be able to look past that.

She wanted nothing more than to kill him.

He left her shortly after he told her of his plan to keep her in line. She had hoped to leave the apartments as soon as he was out of sight from the temple, but quickly found that there were warriors stationed all around the temple to ensure she couldn't leave without anyone knowing. She tried to tell the one stationed outside her apartment door that she was only going for a walk, but she was told without hesitation that it could not be allowed.

She paced the many heavily decorated rooms again, this time for hours, muttering to herself at first about how to get to the cave, then pretending that she was conversing with Pennywise. It was the only thing keeping her sane right then, acting as if he was there with her

instead of a universe away and unable to come to her.

It was a late hour in the middle of the night when she heard screaming from somewhere outside the temple. Ana rushed to one of the windows, seeing nothing amiss in the dark at first. Then, she heard something loud like an explosion coming from somewhere near the forest, and more screaming.

There was a loud knock on the door, and she rushed to open it at once, coming face to face with one of the winged guards. He bowed as he laid eyes on her.

"What is it?" she asked hurriedly.

"An attack, my lady Raanana. I've been informed the Sordidus have invaded the city." Ana knew The Sordidus were a race of large, slimy goblins that lived on a nearby continent, ones that had attacked the fae many times in recent decades. They were largely a nuisance, but were increasing in number and weapons every time they returned, hoping to mine the surrounding area for precious metals.

"Have the others gone to fight?" Ana asked, peering around the fairy's shoulder to look around the empty temple.

"Yes, my lady, but I shall remain stationed here to defend you - "

He was cut off when Ana snatched a large cudgel from the guard's waist and brought it down as hard she could on his head, making him fold to the ground in a heap immediately. Luckily for her, this one hadn't been wearing a gold helmet, indicating that he was not of the warrior class. Knowing she was leaving him vulnerable, she took the time to drag his limp body into the apartment and shut the door. Then, she was off, armed with her silver shank and the truncheon that had given her her freedom.

More of the Sordidus had entered the city limits, and Ana was now dodging goblins and fairies alike as she sprinted towards the forest for cover. She heard one fae cry out her name, then a yelp that indicated that they had been attacked; she didn't bother to turn to look, only looking towards where she intended to go.

She reached the trees, about to wonder if this had been a bit too easy, when she heard a growl nearby. A goblin dripping thick green fluid from its greasy skin and bearing it's jagged teeth had is gaze set on her, and she stopped running to ready her club, knowing she wasn't going to be able to out run it. The creature stood nearly seven feet tall, and with its stature had long, sturdy legs that would allow it to reach her in a few strides. Had she been her former self, the sight of the menacing creature may have reduced her to a sobbing puddle. But now, she had been exposed to a being much more impressive, one that lived to induce fear in anyone around it, and she had grown to adore it. This thing in front of her, readying to pounce, was nothing more than annoyance. When it rushed towards her in a fury of snarls and saliva, Ana swung and bludgeoned the thing right in the temple, causing it to howl in pain, look at her apprehensively, and trample away from her into the trees. Intruders of Dulcis typically weren't used to such confidence from the fairies. Right now, it was the very thing separating Ana from her past.

Ana didn't know how long she journeyed through the forest towards the cave that held her powers. Luckily, the majority of the fighting was taking place in the city, and she only had to sneak around two more goblins before the entrance came into sight. She crouched down, waiting to see if anyone was guarding it, hoping she would have a chance to get in without a fight. There was no movement for several minutes, and she decided that it was now or never.

As she stood and started to hurry towards the entrance, screaming close by made her startle; she turned to look towards the sound, then gasped when hands suddenly grasped her arms and torso. At first, she thought a goblin had grabbed her, but in a few seconds, she realized that she was surrounded by fairies, all with golden helmets adorning their heads.

"Let go of me!" she yelled, trying to struggle out of their grip. She was rewarded with shackles being placed on her wrists, and then she was pushed to her knees. The group of fairies parted, allowing someone to walk up to her. She didn't even need to look up to know who it was.

"Lady Raanana, you are under arrest," came her father's low voice, "for the copulation with, and idolization of the Incubus."

Ana's heart plummeted. One guard, she had been able to get away from. But being restrained by this many, and with her father present, she would need a miracle to outsmart or over power them.

She finally looked up when she saw someone else approaching her. It was Valdis, and she could tell he was pretending to look sullen. But she knew him well enough to know, he was hiding the fact that was absolutely pleased with himself.

17. Chapter 17

'Ana's clan used a grove of gargantuan trees as their penitentiary, having hollowed out the massive trunks to use as individual cells for the captives, the doors keeping them inside made of latticed gold. To the uninformed onlooker, the cluster of enclosures probably looked like a gorgeous, well-kept orchard rather than a prison, with the towering trees lush and green, the surrounding plants well looked after and sprouting every color imaginable.

Ana didn't struggle for her freedom as her weapons were taken from her and she was taken to her delegated trunk, knowing she was sorely outmatched with the dozen guards that the Temple Master thought he needed to keep her in line. Instead, she tried to reason with her father, who was pretending to ignore her pleas for him to listen to reason. He stood with his arms folded neatly in front of him as he watched Ana being forced into her cell, and then gazed at her silently as the door was pushed shut and locked securely. Once she was confined, the guards dispersed, only two remaining as one stood on either side of Master Seaghda.

"Father, *please*," Ana was saying, wrapping her hands around the aurelian spindles that were physically denying her freedom, "you can't do this!"

"I must," he replied calmly, speaking for the first time since announcing that she was under arrest. "It is for your own good, and for the good of those that love you."

"It's not for the benefit of anyone," she disputed, looking past him briefly for Newlyn, wondering if she was in a cell near her right then. "Whatever Valdis told you, he's deceiving you - "

"Valdis didn't have to tell me anything!" Seaghda cut her off with his commanding voice, his demeanor shifting in an instant as she continued to defy him by arguing with him. "My seer saw *everything* that Newlyn saw when she was in your mind. *Everything!* You have fornicated with the Incubus! You have shown it loyalty, affection, friendship! And you have killed innocents in its name!"

Ana stared at him brazenly, her instinct to deny every claim, but knowing there was no purpose to it now. He knew, and his veteran oracles had never been wrong before. After a few silent moments, she decided on her reply. "Not one of them was an innocent, Father."

"So you deny nothing?" he asked, tone voice silky and incriminating as he took a few steps towards her cage.

"Why bother?" Ana said, shaking her head. "Even if I did, would you believe me? And when your seer enters my mind to confirm everything, you'd further accuse me of lying?"

"How far you have fallen, my Raanana," Seaghda replied, shaking his silver-haired head sadly. "My very soul is grieving to see what has become of you."

"And it means nothing that I didn't have my memories when all of this took place?" she asked. "That I had no idea who I was, where I came from, what I had been taught since I was a child?"

"Those are disgraceful excuses for your crimes, and nothing more."

"Crimes?" Ana cried, the idea ludicrous to her. "So that's it, then! I do some things you find offensive in another dimension, where I was forcibly taken to and completely isolated, and that's your verdict! Where is the discussion with the council, my trial, my chance to tell my side?"

Seaghda looked as somber as ever then, his head now hanging towards his feet as was visibly trying to come up with the words he was going to speak next. "There will be no trial, Lady Raanana. The only discussion Valdis and I will be having with the council is whether or not you will be executed outright, or if you will be kept here for the remainder of your life."

Ana almost physically felt her heart break at his statement, his betrayal an assault on her more than the idea of her being put to death. An array of emotions went through her, and the sudden bombardment kept her frozen in place for a few moments before something manifested a reaction. Rather than cry or scream in anger, or fall to the ground and burst into into tears, Ana started to laugh.

The reaction must have caught the Master of the Temple off guard, because he took a few hurried steps backwards. Ana started to laugh so loudly and with so much vigor that she stumbled backwards and into the trunk that served as the back of her jail cell. Her father continued to stand there and watch her with bewilderment as she guffawed with amusement, tears now starting to roll down her cheeks. Only when she started to quiet down did Seaghda speak to her again.

"Raanana! Enough of this inappropriate display!" he said, now yelling.

"Wh - What?" she managed to shriek, wiping tears as she continued to giggle. "What the hell's the difference? What more can you possibly do to me, *dear Father?*" She spit the last two words out sarcastically, the cruelty in her voice making their subject flinch. She had reached a breaking point now, and all attempts to remain respectful toward the fairy that had given her life were completely gone. She approached the golden gate in front of her again. "You know, you could save us all the trouble, and just let me go back to him. That's what I was planning to do anyway." Her confession made her father's eyes widen, and she barked out a laugh at his reaction. "Oh, don't act too surprised, Master Seaghda. If you really took the time to think about it all, do you *really* think I'd prefer this chauvinist way of life over one where I can be free? So I can fuck the Beast, and kill anyone I see fit..." she gasped for dramatic effect, placing her hands over her heart in mock anguish, "And not go to temple every day?"

"That is enough! I will not listen to this unmitigated blasphemy!" her father protested angrily, his hands now balled into fists at his sides, his purple robes billowing around his legs as he started to place in front of her cell.

"Then what will you listen to, Father? Maybe we should finally discuss my mother, since we're being so open, hmm?" Ana said, not caring how vicious she was being. "Would you like to recount to me, and your two loyal guards here, how you'd rather let her *die* than let her have her natural-born gifts?"

Seaghda had finally had enough. "I will not talk to you while you are in this state," he said, turning to walk away.

"You really are on a roll, aren't you? Being responsible not only for the death of your wife, but now your daughter, too?" Ana said, giving him a sweet smile, and he stormed away then without another word. Ana was met with silence only for a few moments, when she heard distant screaming. She had almost forgotten that they were currently under attack.

"Ana, you shouldn't have done that!" a voice said from not too far away, and Ana strained to look around at the other trees.

"Newlyn!" she cried. "I'm so glad you're okay!"

"They only went into my mind. They haven't harmed me," Newlyn replied, and Ana sighed when she realized she was several trunks away from her friend.

"What are they going to do with you?" Ana asked.

"A trial," Newlyn called back, and then Ana jumped when someone was suddenly blocking her view.

"You know, my lady, her sentence really is none of your concern," Valdis said, now standing inches in front of Ana's cell.

"Valdis, get out of here," Ana said in warning, glaring up into the emerald eyes that sneered down at her.

"Or what? You'll insult me?"

"You have civilians to look after," Ana replied as screams started up around them again, this time sounding closer. "Stop wasting time standing here goading me."

Valdis folded his arms in front of his chest, but his smirk didn't falter. "I had a difficult decision to make regarding you, you know."

"Looks like you decided on turning me in and looking like the hero. Well congratulations, Valdis. I hope they made you Temple Master anyway, and I won't even have to be witness to the atrocity."

Valdis continued as if he hadn't heard her. "You really gave me a gift, the way you just spoke to your father just now. It really proved that

you have been corrupted. Now no one will have any doubt that imprisoning you is the right choice."

"Damn right it was the right choice," Ana seethed, and she suddenly lurched towards the door, making Valdis jump back in surprise. "You really are cocky for someone that knows I have no qualms about killing, Valdis."

She saw Valdis swallow hard then, and she laughed at him.

"Silence, you fool!" Valdis commanded shakily. "We still haven't decided Newlyn's fate, you know."

Ana's eyes narrowed even more as she scowled at him, and she knew for her friend's sake that she should keep her mouth shut. But she was picturing somehow reaching through the gate that separated her from her ex-fiance and strangling him with her bare hands. That would have to do for now.

There was a sudden commotion in the grove as Sordidus started to crash through the plants around them, and Valdis let out a terrified shriek. Ana watched in satisfaction as he was chased out of her view, the escorts around him attempting to fight but quickly being overwhelmed and having to flee with him. She was baffled at the sudden number of intruders around her, the area suddenly brimming with the snarling, slimy creatures. She figured they would move on as soon as they realized they wouldn't be able to break through the thick tree trunks or the sturdy gold doors, but her interest was peaked when she realized it looked as though they were searching the cells. She quickly grew concerned for Newlyn's well-being, hoping they would leave her alone.

Ana yelped in surprise when the growling face of a goblin was suddenly in front of her tree, but she quickly regained her composure, going to stand tall in front of her gate and not show any fear. It didn't budge, its yellow eyes staring at her, and Ana saw a large group of them starting to form a half-circle around her tree, all of them starting to stare in her direction.

"Okay then," Ana breathed as she talked to herself, her heart starting to pound in her chest wildly as she realized their attention wasn't

wavering. Her blade and her bludgeon had been taken before being thrown into her cage, and she knew that if they got her gate open, there was little chance she would survive. But none of them were moving towards the door, and she held her breath as more and more Sordidus stopped to gawk at her. Some were even starting to push each other as if to get a better view.

Then, some of them started to part, making a path for one of them to come through. As soon as Ana saw this goblin, she somehow recognized it to be female, with her yellow eyes much larger than the others', and her chest rounded similar to those of a woman's breasts. As she came closer, coming to stand right in front of Ana's cell, Ana noticed that this one had swirled markings all over her skin, as though they had been carved in long ago and had since healed into thick scar tissue. Her pointed ears were pierced with tiny silver hoops, the jewelry seeming like elaborate decoration in comparison to the male counterparts around her.

The female Sordidus watched Ana calmly for a few moments, and then she lifted her head to sniff the air, the beastly behavior reminding Ana instantly of the demon clown that was waiting for her to come home. Once she was done smelling, she slowly approached the gate, looking Ana over intently.

She let out a satisfied huff then, and slowly started to back away. Ana, knowing some of their language, hoped to catch some of the Sordidus speaking in order to figure out exactly what was going on, but they were silent up until this point. Then, the female gestured towards the gate, her only words being, "This one."

Ana was surprised to see that the goblin that sprang towards the door was holding the key to it, indicating that the guards had been overtaken for this very purpose. It started to place it into the lock and Ana started to feel panicked.

"Do not fret, daughter of the master," the female said in the fae's language, heavily accented but understandable nonetheless. "We intend you no harm."

Ana took a steadying breath as the gate swung open then, and the Sordidus continued to stand still around her. "If your intention is to

hold me for ransom, I assure you that my father won't pay it."

"No ransom," the female replied, shaking her head. "Come out."

Ana complied, slowly stepping out of her cell and coming to stand in front of the female. She waited for one, or all of them, to grab her and start tearing her apart. She flinched slightly when the female's hand suddenly came to her forehead, then move about her body as if she was examining her.

"Are you a seer?" Ana asked, but the female stayed silent as she continued, finally taking a step back and out of Ana's personal bubble.

"I see and know much. We take you to cave now."

Ana's mouth fell open slightly in shock. "You're helping me? But, why? How do you know?"

"I pray for days, and am given enlightenment to come here. Reason not clear until now."

Ana swallowed hard, her throat suddenly dry from being feet from creatures that would normally kill her in an instant. "And what is your reason, then?"

The goblin oracle placed her hand on Ana again, this time placing it on her chest. "Pedagogues has touched you here," she said, patting her over her heart, and then her hand moved down, going to pat over the lower part of Ana's belly, "Pedagogues has touched you here."

"Pedagogues...you mean...Pennywise?"

"Pedagogues. Great One. Deadlights."

"You worship him?" she asked quietly, feeling quite shocked at this revelation.

"Yes. We pray. We serve when reason known." The female suddenly let out a loud growl followed by a high-pitched yip, and the group of goblins started to move. "To cave," she said to Ana, gripping her arm.

"Wait, we have to help Newlyn," Ana said, looking behind her towards the trees. "She's locked up too!"

"Will this help the Coniux?"

"Huh?"

"You are mate of Great One. Will this help you?"

"Yes, it will."

One of the goblins broke off from the group, heading towards Newlyn's cell with the key in hand.

"And tell her she needs to meet me in the temple," Ana called, quickly growing accustomed to having a large group of Sordidus at her command. Her thoughts reeled at this new information, and she wondered if Pennywise even knew that he was the subject of this race's religion. She smiled at the picture of telling him about them praying to him, thinking he would find it very stupid. She thought it might be likely that Muir was the one giving the goblin seer 'reason' to come here rather than Pennywise, as Maturin probably would have done the same if he was still alive. But then something hit her.

"Ma'am?" she said politely, looking up at the female that was still guiding her through the town. "What did you mean when you said he touched me here?" she said, placing her hand below her belly just as the goblin had.

"Pedagogues touch your womb. You grow little one."

"You mean, I'm *pregnant*?" Ana gasped. "How do you know?"

"I see and know much," the seer repeated. They had left the outskirts of town, and were know headed into the forest towards the cave that Ana needed to go to. Most of the fairies that saw the large group fled in the opposite direction, except for a few of the warriors that were engaging some of the goblins on the outside of the group. Ana quickly found herself worrying for the safety of the Sordidus that were helping her.

Ana was driven now with much more purpose as they made their

way towards her powers. Getting back to Pennywise seemed more important than anything now, more than Newlyn's safety, more than the city of fairies that was starting to crumble around her. As astonished as she felt learning of her pregnancy, she felt determined to protect it in any way that she could.

She had so many questions for the goblin seer, but now definitely was not the time. Even as they grew closer to her goal, they kept running into fae ready to defend the cave. A few times she heard her name called, and warriors crying out that she was an immoral that was on the loose, and she knew she was incredibly blessed to have the security of seven foot tall goblins around her. When they reached the entrance, many stayed outside to keep the fairies out, and the few guards that were still inside were not warriors, the ones that normally protected the cave likely having gone to the town to fight instead. They were little trouble for the Sordidus that were at her side. She knew she should have felt some remorse for their deaths, but she didn't.

There were rows and rows of vials of stolen powers on a seemingly endless number of shelves in the cave, and Ana started to frantically search for the the vial that had her birth name inscribed on it. She was spinning around to look on another shelf when she nearly collided into the female, who was holding a vial filled with bright red in her hand.

"Yours," she said simply, and Ana quickly reached for it. Without pause or ceremony, Ana threw it to the ground with all the strength she could manage, and the vial shattered into a million little pieces. The red inside started to float and swirl towards Ana's face, starting to seep into her nose and mouth. Ana gasped a bit as the gifts that were rightfully hers started to take hold of her body once again. When she was able to manage a shaky but unobstructed breath, the electrifying feeling that had been running through her growing to a calm tingle, she removed the white robes that covered her. She easily ripped a large hole in the back of them, at the same time feeling her wings start to sprout and take shape, and then she put her robes back on. As she opened her wings and felt them stretch free behind her, she noticed that the Sordidus in the room were kneeling.

"Coniux," the seer said, her arms spread before her as if to offer

something. "How can we serve?"

Ana smiled as she looked around the room, their submission only satisfying to her because she knew she had a better chance of getting back to Pennywise with their help. "I want every last one of these vials smashed to bits, but only when I reach the temple."

"Yes, Coniux."

"And no more killing fairies today, unless you are defending yourselves. I want you to go back home once I am gone."

"You will return to the Great One?"

"Yes. It seems I have something that is his," Ana said, a hand going to her belly without thought. She started to head towards the entrance to the cave, the female following right behind her. "On second thought, there are some fairies you can kill." The female's toothy grin flashed for the first time. She might be one of the spiritual leaders of the Sordidus, but she was a follower of the Eater of the Worlds nonetheless. "I want all the council members dead. Every single one. And I want some of you to stay back and help Newlyn become Temple Master." She turned to the seer, taking one of her large hands in her own. "I thank you sincerely for your help. Pennywise and I will be forever grateful."

After paying gratitude to the Sordidus, she stretched out her wings, letting them vibrate and carry her into the sky for the first time. She was initially afraid that she wouldn't know how to fly, but it was as if her wings had been with her the entire time as she soared above the trees and towards the temple. There was still a lot of fighting taking place below her, and her attention was drawn to it as she flew. But as a warrior who was also in the sky started to hurtle towards her, her fighting instincts took over in a flash. The fairies clashed together in a frenzy of punches and kicks, and Ana was able to grip her hands on the warrior's face and neck as he started to reach to his waist for a weapon. Their clan really despised violence and killing, and this warrior may have been able to take her down within seconds had he reached for his blade right away. But to Ana's benefit, he had tried to subdue her first without mortally wounding her. It had given her time to draw forth the red light of energy that was flowing down to

her hands now, and she used it to burn right through his flesh. He went limp just as Ana's hands felt his skull and spine beneath them, and she let go, watching his now lifeless body fall from the sky. She heard more screaming as fairies looked up to find the source of the dead fairy, and she felt strangely satisfied when they spotted her flying through the air.

Just as she made it to the temple, she saw that a group of Sordidus were attacking someone right in front of the doors. She landed gracefully, curious to see if it was one of the council members, and it was, blood spurting from the torn flesh in his neck already. But she was surprised to see that Seaghda was also in the clutches of a couple of the goblins, and they stopped what they were doing when they saw her. She took the opportunity to lock eyes with him, his blue eyes glaring at her as he eyed her wings.

"We should have left you there to rot!" he seethed, pulling against the grip of the goblins that were holding onto his arms and legs. "I am ashamed to call you daughter!"

Ana's mouth turned into a half smile as the words cut through her like daggers. "For once we agree on something," she said. "But before I go, I think you should know that you have a grandchild on the way," she said, rubbing her womb gently. Her father's eyes widened, and he seemed almost rabid as he looked at her.

"I hope the thing dies in your belly and kills you with it!" he bellowed. The Sordidus within ear shot started to growl at his statement.

"Now, that's not a kind thing to say to your own flesh and blood," Ana said calmly.

"I'd kill that thing if I ever got the chance! No grandchild of mine will be offspring of the Incubus!"

His words sealed his fate in Ana's mind. She had fully intended to let the goblins kill him. But if any small part of her had wanted to let him live because he was her father, now she would have no choice. His threats were an endangerment to her child, and that would not do. She quickly indicated to the goblins to carry on, and then started

to head into the temple. As much as she loathed Seaghda right then and everything he stood for, she still couldn't bring herself to watch his death.

She stopped for a moment when she saw swirls of color flying through the air, and surprised fairies as the contents of the now smashed vials were finding their rightful owners. She knew she had to leave now, or risk being confronted by emotional fairies with abilities they didn't necessarily know how to control. But she was still in awe seeing it all take place, her people finally able to have the gifts that had been stolen from them at birth.

Forcing herself to pull her attention away from the grand spectacle taking place and go through the doors, she headed towards the statue of Maturin the turtle. Newlyn, sweet, wonderful Newlyn, was already there waiting for her.

"Do you know how to open it?" Ana asked as she grew closer. Newlyn didn't answer, instead pointing towards four Sordidus that had one terrified looking fairy in the middle of them. Ana walked up to him, keeping her demeanor calm even though she was ecstatic to be getting out of there. "I promise you'll live as long as you cooperate."

"But, Master Seaghda - "

"Master Seaghda is dead," Ana quipped crudely. "And I'm the one controlling your fate right now, so you'd better listen."

The fairy looked at her defiantly, and then dropped to his knees. "I won't. The council has decided your fate, and I can't let you escape."

Ana groaned in annoyance, turning back to her friend. "Newlyn, can you see how to do it from his mind?"

She shook her head quickly, tears in her eyes as she looked at Ana. "No, I already tried and he's very powerful at resisting, I'm so sorry."

Ana walked up to one of the goblins, praying he was able to understand her. "I need you to find your seer, as quickly as you can." She breathed a sigh of relief as it took off without hesitation. "Newlyn, they have a very powerful oracle in their clan. If you keep

the peace, I'm sure you can learn a lot from each other."

"What do you mean?" Newlyn chirped in alarm.

"I want you to be Temple Master, Newlyn. I think you'd be amazing at it. They've already agreed to help you take and maintain your position," Ana said, putting her hands on the fairy's shoulders. "We both know you can do it."

"But, the council - "

"Is dead."

Newlyn gasped, clapping a hand to her mouth. "But Valdis - "

"Won't be a problem," Ana replied without pause.

"Won't I?" came her ex-fiance's voice. "I thought it might be a bit of a problem for you if I cut that demon child right out of you." He was standing in front of the double doors which were closed now, brandishing the silver dagger that Ana had stolen from her father's collection.

She smiled when she saw him, and she saw the confidence waver on his features. "What a gift," she said, starting to walk towards him slowly. "And here I thought I'd just have one of the Sordidus kill you."

"You dare threaten me?" Valdis said, holding the blade out in front of him now as she approached.

"You really are a dunce, aren't you?" Ana replied. "Did you not notice my dead father laying out there on your way in? Or perhaps that I have my wings now?" She didn't give him a chance to reply, shooting towards him so fast that he barely had time to react. She grasped his wrist tightly, twisting into such a painful position that he dropped the weapon. She caught it before it hit the ground, pressing it into his throat as she glared up at him. "How dare *you* threaten Newlyn, and my unborn child."

"Raanana, please, show mercy - " the fairy started to beg, but he was silenced when Ana plunged the blade swiftly into his neck. His blood started to spurt out, hitting Ana's face and clothing, but she didn't

flinch. She pulled the knife out, taking a few steps back to watch as Valdis clawed at the wound in his neck, trying to say something that only resulted in a blood-filled gurgle. He collapsed to the temple floor just as the female seer came through the doors.

"I open," she said as she passed Ana and Valdis' dead body, and Ana hurried after her. Newlyn was watching her in complete disbelief.

"Newlyn, you have to lead our people. They have their powers back, and the council and Valdis are dead. It's a blank slate," she said, and pulled her friend into a hug. Behind Newlyn, Ana noticed a bright, shimmering light shoot up from the floor to the ceiling, and she new the portal was open. "Promise me you'll try."

"I will," Newlyn squeaked quietly.

"I'm sorry I wasn't a better friend. And I'm sorry my coming home led to all of this bloodshed," Ana said. She turned to the goblin seer next, repeating her gratitude and assuring her that she'd tell Pennywise everything that they had done for her.

After her goodbyes, and one last look around the temple, she stood in front of the beam of white light. She briefly wondered how her fresh new powers would translate into her human form, knowing it was likely that her first flight was also probably her last. But she couldn't dwell on it. She had to get home. She took a deep breath, an instinctive hand going over her belly, and took a step into the light. Instantly she felt like she was being pulled into the sky, unable to move as she saw the blurred colors swirling about, and fairies trying out their wings for the first time in the sky around her.

18. Chapter 18

Even as Ana was careening through the cosmos, she strained her eyes to see if she could catch a glimpse of the three rotating lights, hoping they were pursuing her once again. But the far off stars and galaxies seemed to be the only things illuminating the black void around her, and she hoped that Pennywise was still on Earth somewhere waiting for her and wasn't off in space for some reason. She knew it was unlikely as he didn't really like leaving the town, let alone the planet after having made it is home for so long, but she was becoming anxious that she would come back and he wouldn't be there. She didn't think she could handle it if she was apart from him any longer.

A surge of joy ran through her when she felt her feet hit something solid and the pearly white around her dissipated. Her eyes had to adjust for only a few moments before she took in the scenery around her; she was back in the sacred area in the woods, standing upon the large boulder that she had been forced upon right before going back to Dulcis. She looked around her, expecting something to happen, some sort of ambush or greeting. But the trees around her were still, and the noise in the vicinity minimal, hearing only a few songbirds start up their chirps again after being disrupted by her arrival. She took a deep breath to calm her nerves, knowing she had been on edge constantly for quite some time, and now that she was utterly alone, it made her feel even more uneasy.

It gave her an opportunity to figure out how much of her abilities she had lost on the trip back to Earth. The first thing she did was look down at her hands, finding that her skin was back to its pale, non-glowing human color. She ran a hand through her hair and pulled some in front of her face. It was dark auburn, not bright blue. And then in a small panic, her hand went over her lower belly, and fear ran through her as she wondered how all of this would effect the growing being inside of her. But once she realized that she had obviously conceived on Earth and was supposedly still pregnant while on Dulcis, then theoretically it should have survived.

Reaching behind her back, Ana was disappointed not to feel wings through the white robes that had somehow survived the journey. She

wished she had had a longer flight when she had the chance. Her heart started to race as she anticipated losing everything she had worked so hard to gain, and hopped down from the large rock and jogged over to a tree. Without pause, she balled her hand into a fist and smashed it into the trunk. Her hand crashed through and splintered the bark easily, punching a large hole through it and causing the tree to shake violently. She whooped in delight, pulling her hand back out. She had broken her skin in numerous places, and right before her eyes it began to mend itself, little shards of bark being pushed out of her wounds and falling down to the ground.

All at once she wasn't just hoping to see Pennywise. She wanted to see Lamia, too.

Ana cursed under her breath, knowing that her journey back to Derry would be a long one. She was about to start out of the woods on foot, when she turned her attention back towards the boulder. As she went back over to it, she found the golden glowing sphere sitting in the middle of it, the same one that had been used to open the portal in the first place. She reached down and grasped it in her hand, wondering if destroying it was the best plan. But there was no desire to go back to her fairy homeland, and the last thing she wanted was for some of them to come back to Earth and disrupt her life again. So she smashed it down onto the rock with all of her strength, a loud noise like a gong being struck sounding through the clearing as metal struck mineral. It didn't shatter or disintegrate like she had hoped, and as she studied the sphere in her hand, she noted that it looked cracked now, but still maintained its glow. She tried to smash it again. Again. It cracked more and more, but still shined up at her like the gleam of a mischievous child's eyes. Ultimately, she decided to take it with her, hoping that Pennywise would have a solution.

She had been walking through the forest for about ten minutes, hoping that she was going in a direction that would lead her to a road, when a pulsating shiver began to work its way up her spine. Laughter began to rise up out of her throat as the familiar pleasurable feeling started to overwhelm her senses, having not felt it in what seemed like eternity, and she started to call out for her lover as she felt him draw closer.

"I'm here, Penny!" she yelled, and was about to repeat herself when

she saw movement out of the corner of her eye. She whipped around to face it, letting out a noise between a laugh and a sob as she took in the glorious sight of Pennywise the Dancing Clown standing a few yards away from her in the trees. The look on his painted features was unreadable at first, the corners of his red lips pointed downwards, his golden eyes narrowed as he stared at her. She was about to spout off something sarcastic, like 'don't look so happy to see me', but she knew without a doubt he was wondering if his eyes were deceiving him, if he should trust that she was really there. She didn't know if she was just projecting the thoughts onto him, or somehow she was now able to read his feelings. But that wasn't the moment to figure it out.

Ana ran over to him in a flash, and she saw his face break into a toothy smile just as she came close enough to throw her arms around his torso. She pressed her body into his, the familiar feeling of his lean frame making her feel safe and warm. He must have felt the same, as she felt a vibration run through his broad chest, almost like he was purring.

"My sweet girl," he growled lowly, one gloved hand gently cradling the back of her head as they embraced, his other arm encircling her so tightly that she almost had a hard time catching her breath. "Pennywise is so happy to see you!"

"Me too, Penny," she said, nuzzling her face into the silk covering his form, taking in his familiar musty scent, hoping that she'd never have to struggle to remember it ever again. "I missed you so much!"

The clown planted a kiss on the top of her head. "Your hair isn't blue," he mused, and Ana laughed and pulled away so she could look at him. The butterflies in her stomach started to dance all over again when she took in his features, feeling utterly ecstatic just to be able to let her eyes fall on his again.

"Does that disappoint you?" she teased, reaching up to place a hand behind his large head and pull it down towards her, starting to plant kisses along his jawline.

"Pennywise doesn't care what color your hair is," he said gruffly, and he moved to grip her face in his hands, pulling her into a long,

passionate kiss. She nearly melted as his plump ruby lips moved with hers, and his limber tongue began to explore every part of her mouth. A satisfying throbbing started in her groin, and she let out an uninhibited moan as his hand lazily trailed its way down to lightly stroke it over her white robes. Then in one sudden movement, his hands moved to grip her hips roughly, hoisting her up with little effort, and she instinctively wrapped her legs around his waist. She felt his hardened cock pressing into her core as he walked them over to the nearest tree, pressing her into in unceremoniously, making her hit her head just a little. It made her giggle.

Layers of silver and white cloth were pushed aside without a second thought, and the entity was thrusting into her without reserve, Ana's cries by far the loudest noise in the surrounding woods. He was moving in and out of her so quickly and with so much force that he was grunting from the effort, the guttural sounds making Ana even more aroused, her moans of pleasure increasing in volume. When they finished, Pennywise still kept her pinned to the tree for a few peaceful moments, planting slow, lazy kisses down her neck and collarbone.

"Love you," came Pennywise's gravelly voice, the words coming between kisses and nibbles on her ear. Ana looked at him and smiled, her fingers slowly combing through his orange, fluffy locks.

"I love you," she replied quietly. To her, this was the perfect moment, and she wanted it to last forever. But there were a lot of other things in the back of Ana's mind that she knew they needed to deal with, and already they were starting to flood back to the surface. "Penny, there's something we need to talk about, and it's pretty important."

The cosmic entity slowly let her down to the ground, his arms still wrapped around her as though he never wanted to let her go. She looked up at him, wondering if he had already read her mind and knew, growing fearful of how he was going to react to all of this. Just as she opened her mouth to start telling him, however, something else distracted her in an instant.

It wasn't just a feeling; it was an innate knowledge that Lamia was nearby, almost as if her subconsciousness had some sort of security system that warned her of impending danger, and Lamia had just

crossed the threshold. Ana didn't even have to look around to spot her, as she automatically turned towards where the blonde entity was now standing after pulling herself out of Pennywise's arms.

"You should have come earlier, you just missed the show," Ana sneered, taking a step towards her. She fought back the laughter that was threatening to burst out of her as she took in her disheveled appearance once again.

"Little fairy, you just can't seem to stay away, can you?" Lamia responded, her one eye glaring at Ana with pure hatred. "I went through all that trouble to get you home, give you back to your family and your betrothed, and yet here you are."

"They're all dead. There's not much there for me anyway," Ana said. Lamia was about to respond, when Pennywise's laughter interrupted them.

"You killed him!" Pennywise said, and Ana knew he was starting to see her memories. "That arrogant little fairy thought he was going to marry you, and you stuck him like a pig!" He was doubling over in laughter now, as if the thought was the most amusing thing ever. "And your father, you let him die without a second thought, you beautiful, naughty little thing!"

Ana saw panic run across Lamia's features, and Ana smiled at her, feeling a smug satisfaction as the evil entity finally started to wonder what danger she was in now. "That's right, I did," Ana replied.

"Is that supposed to make me feel afraid of you?" Lamia said, barely audible above the laughing clown. "I've done things far worse, things you can't even imagine!"

"And...you met the goblin matron," Pennywise continued on, almost as if he were the only contribution to the conversation, that he wasn't hearing the exchange between Ana and Lamia. Ana looked up at him to study is his face, because now the laughter had died completely. "And...you're *pregnant*."

Ana wanted to keep staring at her lover, to gauge his reaction to this realization, but she couldn't give Lamia the chance to attack first. If

Lamia was ever going to kill her, it would be now, in a jealous, impassioned rage. She didn't have time to try to convince Pennywise to kill her, something she had tried to do numerous times in the past and had failed. So without hesitation, she turned towards Lamia, who now looked absolutely mortified and enraged, and charged her. As she crashed into Lamia and knocked her forcefully to the ground, the young entity let out a screech of surprise. Lamia tried to punch and scratch with her one arm as Ana moved to straddle her at the hips and keep her pinned to the ground. One of Lamia's swipes connected, and Ana let out a howl of pain as claws slashed across her chest. In response, she grabbed onto Lamia's wrist with both hands, giving her arm a forcefully yank; there was a sickening pop as the shoulder was dislocated, and Lamia was screaming now.

"I suppose I should thank you," Ana said through heaving breaths, now not having to put much effort into keeping Lamia in place. "If you hadn't sent me back home, I wouldn't have gotten the strength to kill you."

"I'll rip that baby right out of you!" Lamia bellowed, and suddenly Pennywise was crouched right beside them. Ana was almost startled at the expression on his face, as it was the angriest she had ever seen him look, and she had seen him pissed off quite a bit. The clown reached towards the blonde as if he was going to place his hand on her neck, but Ana gently pushed it away.

"She's mine," she said gruffly, and Pennywise looked at her in surprise for a second before slowly nodding. Ana felt relieved that Pennywise was letting her call the shots with this, and after taking a deep breath she turned back to the writhing, shrieking blonde beneath her.

"Master! Please reconsider this! You know I'll do anything - " Lamia was yelling, and Ana interrupted her pleas with a hard punch to the face. She felt cheek bone crack beneath her, and the entity started to scream in pain again.

"You're done making requests of him," Ana said, malice dripping from her voice. "You're done manipulating him, and interfering with *our* lives." Ana was about to wrap her hands around Lamia's throat, when she felt a sudden tug on her mind, and the sudden desire to let the goth girl free; Ana shook her head as if it would rid her thoughts of

the intruding influence, knowing Lamia was pulling her focus from controlling Pennywise and trying to do it to her.

"Fuck you!" Ana yelled, and she jabbed her thumb into Lamia's remaining eye. The woods around them were filled with screams of anguish combined with Pennywise's delighted laughter, and it didn't stop even after Ana completely gouged the optical organ from its socket and had casually thrown it aside, likely to be some animal's dinner later on.

Lamia stopped shrieking some time after, now only tired sobs escaping her throat. "All I wanted was to please you, Dominus." Ana started to feel a twinge of sympathy for the mutilated woman, starting to sense without a doubt that being with the Eater of Worlds truly had been Lamia's only intention, that everything else had been done to serve that purpose, not out of malevolence.

Ana wondered if part of her retained fairy powers included knowing others' intentions; not necessarily reading their thoughts or memories, but feeling their emotions and auras. But the sympathy she was feeling was minuscule compared to the hatred that ran through her now. She reached for a softball-sized rock that was lying nearby, and brought it down onto Lamia's temple as hard as she could. Skull cracked beneath her, blood spraying the surrounding area, and Ana was surprised that it only took one blow to actually kill the entity. She must be a lot stronger than she thought.

She sighed, about to stand, when Pennywise placed a gloved hand on her arm to stop her. Ana was about to ask what he was doing, when she saw lights starting to shine through Lamia's empty eye sockets. Ana had nearly forgotten that she need to destroy the lights inside of her to truly kill all of her.

As the small, rotating orbs started to leave Lamia's body, Ana quickly cupped her hands around them, hoping that would be enough to keep them in place. She started to focus all of her energy there, and her fingers and palms quickly started to vibrate and glow red-hot. The lights tried to escape her grasp, and Pennywise acted quickly, blocking the escape with his own hands. Lamia's essence started to turn red from the energy flowing through Ana, and a hissing noise indicated that they were being burned.

Ana nearly fell over from the burst of energy that shot through her, and finally Lamia's lights had ruptured and disappeared in a sparkling display of falling red and white sparkles. "Is it over? Is she dead?" Ana asked in a mild panic, and Pennywise pulled her to her feet, brushing dirty and leaves from her bottom like the state of her robes were the most important thing ever right then.

"She's dead, sweet girl."

"Oh, thank god," Ana gasped. She barely noticed the clown continuing to fuss over her; now, he was tugging at the top of her robes.

"You're bleeding," he said, trying to pull them off so he could get a better look at the gashes that Lamia had made in her chest.

"So? I've bled before. I'm fine," Ana said, smiling as he managed to tug them off and leave her standing naked in the middle of the woods. "Well, this is cold."

"You're carrying my offspring. Pennywise gets to decide when you're fine," he responded shortly, and then he let out a short 'hmmph'.

"What is it?" she said, not really caring at the moment, because he had mentioned that she was pregnant and didn't seem disgusted about it.

"Your wounds, they're not there."

"I heal fast now. In addition to a lot other things we probably don't know about." Pennywise locked eyes with her then, trying to sift through her mind and know every little thing that had happened on Dulcis. "Can I have my clothing back?"

She held up her arms and he pulled them over her body forcefully, all focus now on going through her mind instead of on being gentle. She giggled when he scooped her up in his arms then, starting to trudge through the trees.

"Good that stupid Valdis fairy is dead. Or I'd feel the need to go there and kill him myself," he grumbled as he walked.

"It was pretty satisfying killing him," Ana replied. "Did you know you have like an entire religion devoted to you, Penny?" she asked then, referring to the Sordidus.

"Pennywise has always had devotees and worshipers," he said nonchalantly.

"And you just don't care?"

"No. Why should I?"

"They helped me a lot, Penny. I probably would have been executed if they hadn't interfered." She expected him to argue, or to have some nasty retort, but he was silent for a few moments.

"What would my sweet girl have me do?"

"I guess I don't know. It's not like you can go there, they live on the same planet as the fairies."

They spoke in more detail of the Sordidus as they traveled through the trees, and they discussed the possibility that Pennywise could try to visit them one day, if he felt he could resist the temptation to kill and eat fairies if he went. They talked more in depth of Ana's experiences on Dulcis, and she asked him why she was able to destroy Lamia's essence lights with her hands. Pennywise explained that it was probably one of the defense mechanisms that Maturin had originally given the fairies, along the same lines as their innate ability to make Pennywise sick if he killed and consumed any of them.

"Penny, I'm a lot faster than I was before. If you let me walk or even run we could be home faster."

"No. You need to rest," he said stubbornly, continuing to carry her in his arms. He insisted on making the trek through the woods, and then he changed into Robert and stole them a car to drive back to Derry once they reached a road. Ana kept wanting to ask him more about his feelings on her pregnancy, but she chickened out every time she was about to do it. Finally, Robert turned to look at her as they drove, giving her a concerned side glance.

"Why won't you just ask me how I feel?" Robert asked, and Ana bit her lip, looking out the window to avoid his gaze.

"Because I don't know if I want to know."

"Well, I'm happy about it, Ana. I am."

Ana turned to look at him in surprise. "Really, you are?"

"Of course I am."

"Oh, I'm so relieved!"

Robert started laughing. "Why wouldn't I be happy?"

"I don't know how eternal entities feel about reproducing!" she replied, throwing up her hands. "For all I know you'd think if it as some sort of competition or something. I didn't even know you even *could* get me pregnant. Did you?"

"It's not something I'd ever really thought of before," Robert said truthfully. "But yes, once I declared you my mate, then it's possible even though you're of a lesser species."

"Well that might have been nice to know," Ana mumbled.

"It didn't cross my mind. And regardless, you should feel privileged."

Ana smiled, wanting to protest or say something snarky, but as arrogant as the statement sounded, she *did* feel privileged. Not only did she feel that way because he was some powerful cosmic being, but because she loved him with everything that she had.

"So...do you know what this baby is going to be like?" she asked timidly.

"What do you mean?"

"Like, is it automatically going to be a shapeshifter? Am I going to give birth to a big, hairy spider?"

"I don't know."

"How would I even give birth to a spider? What if it shifts into a toddler while it's in there? Is it going to eat flesh? Is it going to eat *my* flesh while in the womb?"

"I don't know."

"How do you not know? Who *does* know? Someone has to!"

"You have a lot of questions."

"Well, yeah!"

"This isn't something that happens all that often, so it's not common knowledge, Ana. I've existed since before time was even fathomed and I haven't reproduced before. How would anyone else know what expect?"

What Robert was saying didn't make Ana feel any better, and she started to feel more and more anxious as more possibilities began to flood her mind.

"Please stop worrying so much. If having offspring between the two of us is possible, then you should trust that it will work just fine," Robert said, reaching over and grabbing her hand in his to reassure her.

"Easy for you to say. You were just there for the fun part."

"I'll be there the entire way through, sweet girl."

"Do you promise, Penny?"

"I promise. I love you," Robert said sweetly, turning to look at her with large, beautiful eyes. It calmed her down a bit, and she sighed and sat back in her seat. She was even able to drift off to sleep, waking when the car came to a stop. She realized that they were back in Derry, something she never thought she could be so happy about. Robert insisted on helping her out of the car and carrying her into Neibolt house, much like a groom would carry his bride across the threshold on their wedding night.

Being back in the house was one of the best feelings in the world to

Ana. It looked exactly the same as the last time she had seen it, and it thrilled her knowing that Lamia would no longer be coming over for surprise visits. She took a long, relaxing bath, and then joined Robert in the bed. He seduced her almost instantly, but their lovemaking was much sweeter and more attentive as compared to their latest romp in the woods. After, Ana laid on her back with Robert on his side and curled up to her, his face resting on her belly as he took in her scent and told her how miserable he had been when she was gone.

He even told her all about his latest play time with the Losers. She was caught off guard at first that he had chosen to kill so many of them, and she held back her grimaces as he described cruelly murdering Ben in front of a devastated Beverly. But she didn't attempt to reprimand him for it, and part of her barely even cared at this point, because as he was telling her about all the horrible things he had done to his 'friends', he was lovingly stroking her belly and planting it with soft kisses. All that she cared about right then was that he was excited for the child that was growing inside of her, and that with the majority of the Losers gone there would be less things wanting to potentially come and harm her baby. That made all of the horrendous things the two of them had done just fine, in her mind.